A

HARMONY

OF

THE FOUR GOSPELS.

FOUNDED ON THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE HARMONIA EVANGELICA, BY THE REV. EDWARD GRESWELL.

WITH THE PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS OF DR. DODDRIDGE.

DESIGNED FOR THE USE OF FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS, AND FOR PRIVATE EDIFICATION.

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PREFACE.

The objects in view in compiling the present work, have been to give such a Harmony of the Gospels as might furnish heads of families with a suitable work for family instruction: schools with a profitable school book; and Christians in general with a combined statement of the different accounts given of our Lord by the Evangelists, so that all may have a more distinct and full view of his Divine and glorious character.

The plan of Mr. Greswell's Harmony, given in his Harmonia Evangelica, on the whole, seemed to the Editor the most satisfactory of those which he has had the opportunity of consulting, and has therefore been preferred to that of others; and has been followed with but slight variations.

The fundamental principles of Mr. Greswell's Harmony are, 1, That the last three Gospels are regular compositions; 2, That St. Matthew's Gospel is partly regular and partly irregular; 3, That each of the Gospels was written in the order in which it stands; 4, That the Gospels last written, in every instance, were supplemental to the prior. For the full investigation of this subject, with the detailed evidence, the reader is referred to that valuable work, entitled, Dissertations on the Principles and Arrangement of the

Harmony of the Gospels, by the Rev. E. Greswell, 3 vols. 8vo.

The Reflections of Dr. Doddridge, though wanting in that more prominent statement of Evangelical doctrines which marks those of Guyse, Scott, and some others, are yet so peculiarly devotional and practical, as to be very edifying. It is hoped that they may be more extensively useful by being thus connected with an improved Harmony in a portable volume.

In forming the combined text, the Editor has chiefly availed himself of that published by the Moravian brethren, only following the order of Mr. Greswell's arrangement.

He has prefixed a striking Introduction taken from Baxter's Reasons of the Christian Religion, giving an account of the peculiar characteristics of the Gospel of Christ; with some slight alterations and additions.

He will be truly thankful, should it please God to make the work acceptable and useful to his church.

Watton Rectory,
Oct. 1, 1832.

INTRODUCTION

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL.

"THE Gospel or doctrine of Christ has the very image and superscription of God, I will not say imprinted on it, that is too little, but intrinsically animating and constituting it. The *matter* and *design* contains the most wonderful expression of the *wisdom of God*, that ever was made to man on earth. All is mysterious, yet admirably fit, consistent and congruous. That a world which is visibly and undeniably fallen into wickedness and misery, should have a Redeemer, Saviour, and Mediator towards God! That he should be one that is near enough to God and unto us, and hath the nature of both: that he should be the second *Adam*, the Root of the redeemed and regenerate: that God should give all mercy from himself, from his own bounty and fulness, and not (as unwilling) be persuaded to it by another; and therefore that the Redeemer be not any angel or intermediate person, but *God himself:* that thus God comes nearer unto man, who is revolted from him, to draw up man again to him: that he loose not the world, and yet do not

violate his governing justice: that he be so merciful, as not to be unrighteous, nor permit his laws and government to be despised; and yet so just, as that his only Son must die before one sinner can be forgiven: that he gives man a new law and conditions of salvation, suitable to his lapsed guilty state; and leaves him not under a law and conditions, which were fitted to the innocent: that he revealed himself to the apostate world in that way, which only is fit for their recovery, that is, in his admirable love and goodness, yet combined with unutterable purity and tenderness, that so love might win our love, and attract those hearts, which under guilt and the terrors of condemning justice would never have been brought to love him: that guilty souls have such evidence of God's reconciliation to encourage them, to expect his pardon, and to come to him with joy and boldness in their addresses; having a Mediator to trust in, and his sacrifice, merits, and acceptable name, to plead with God: that justice and mercy are so admirably conjoined in these effects: that Satan, and the world, and death, should be so conquered, in a suffering way, and man have so perfect a pattern to imitate, for self-denial, humility, contempt of honour, wealth and life, and exact obedience, and resignation to the will of God, with perfect love to God and man: that the world should be under such an universal Administrator, and the church be all united in such a Head; and have one in their nature that has risen from the dead, to be in possession of

the glory which they are going to, and thence to send down his Spirit to sanctify them and fit them for heaven; and afterwards to be their Judge, and to receive them unto blessedness: and that sinners now be not condemned merely for want of innocency, but for rejecting the grace and mercy which would have saved them: that we have all this taught us by a Messenger from heaven, and a perfect rule of life delivered to us by him, and all this sealed by a Divine attestation: that in the weakness and helplessness to which man is sunk, He provides the gifts of the Spirit to enlighten, to regenerate, to sanctify, to be in his people a Spirit of adoption, to console, and to make them meet for heaven: that this doctrine is suited to the capacity of the weakest, and yet so mysterious as to exercise the strongest wits; and is delivered to us, not by an imposing force, but by the exhortations and persuasions of men like ourselves, commissioned to open the evidences of truth and necessity in the Gospel: all this is no less than the image and wonderful effect of the *wisdom of God*.

And his *goodness* and *love*, his holiness and justice, are as resplendent in it all: for this is the effect of the whole design, to set up a glass in the work of our redemption, in which God's *love* and *holiness* should be as powerfully represented to mankind, as his *power* was in the works of creation. Here sinful man is saved by a means which he never thought of or desired: he is fetched up from the gates of

hell; redeemed from the sentence of the righteous violated law of God, and the execution of his justice: The Eternal Word so condescends to man in the assumption of our nature, as that the greatness of the love and mercy, incomprehensible to man, becomes the greatest difficulty to our belief. He reveals to us the things of the world above, and brings life and immortality to light: He dwells with men; He converses with the meanest: He preaches the glad tidings of salvation to the world: He refuses not such familiarity with the poorest or the worst, as is needful to their cure: He spends his time in doing good, and healing all manner of bodily diseases: He refuses the honours and riches of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh, to work out our salvation: He bears the ingratitude and abuse of sinners, and endures to be scorned, buffeted, spit upon, tormented and crucified by those, to whom he had done no greater wrong than to seek their salvation: He makes himself a sacrifice for sin, to shew the world what sin deserved, and to save them from the deserved punishment. God had at first decreed and declared, that death should be the punishment of sin: and Satan had maliciously drawn man to it, by contradicting this threatening of God, and making man believe that God would falsify his word, and that he did envy man the felicity of his advancement to be liker God in knowledge: And now Christ will first justify the truth and righteousness of God, and

will demonstrate, by himself dying in our stead, that death is indeed the wages of sin; and will shew the world, that God is so far from envying their felicity, that he will purchase it at the dearest rate, and deliver them freely from the misery which sin and Satan had involved them in. Thus enemies are reconciled by the sufferings of him whom they offended; even by his sufferings in the flesh, whose Godhead could not suffer; and by his death as man, who as God was most immortal. As soon as he was risen, he first appeared to a woman, who had been a sinner, and sent her as his first messenger with words of love and comfort to his disconsolate disciples, who had but lately sinfully forsaken him: He gives them no upbraiding words, but meltingly says to her, *Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God.* He after this familiarly converses with them, and instructs them in the things concerning the kingdom of God. He bids them preach the gospel to every creature, proclaiming salvation for all the world, that will not reject it; and appoints messengers to preach it unto all; and whatever pains or suffering it cost them, to go through all with patience and alacrity, and to be deterred by nothing from the saving of men's souls. He gave the Holy Spirit miraculously to them, to enable them to carry on this work; and to leave upon record to the world, the infallible narrative of his life and doctrine: His gospel is filled up with matter of conso-

lation, with promises of mercy, pardon and salvation, the description of the privileges of holy souls, justification, adoption, peace and joy: and finally, He governs and defends his church, and pleads our cause, and secures our interest in heaven, according to the promises of this his word. Thus is the gospel the very *image* of the *wisdom* and *goodness* of God. And such a *doctrine* from such a *person* must needs be Divine."

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PART I.

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HARMONY OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.

SECTION I.

Mark i. 1.—Luke i. 1—4.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye witnesses, and ministers of the word: it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.

Let us humbly adore the Divine Goodness, that facts of so great importance as these now to be laid before us were not left to the uncertainty of oral tradition, but delivered to the church in writing, by persons who had so many opportunities of learning the truth, and have given such full proof of their integrity in relating it.—Let us be thankful that we have not only one such history, but that several undertook this excellent and necessary work, by whose united testimony the whole is confirmed; while it is also illustrated by the variety of their narrations, each inserting some considerable circumstance which the rest have omitted. Let us rejoice in that providential care which hath preserved this invaluable treasure through so many succeeding ages, and some of them periods of the grossest darkness and the hottest persecution.

While we study this *orderly series* of sacred history, let us be concerned that our faith may be established by it, and our other graces proportionably advanced; maintaining a continual dependance on that blessed Spirit, by whose instruction it was written to lead us into wise and pious reflections upon it.

To conclude; from the care which this holy evangelist expresseth for the edification and comfort of his friend Theophilus, let us learn to regard it as one of the most important offices of friendship to labour for the spiritual advantage of each other; by endeavouring not only to awaken and instruct those that are entirely unacquainted or unaffected with divine things, but also, as we have opportunity, to confirm the faith and quicken the zeal of the most established Christians with whom we converse. Happy the men whose tongues and whose pens are employed in so good a work: may they never, in the remotest ages, fail of some *excellent Theophilus* to welcome and encourage their pious attempts.

SECTION II.

Luke i. 5—25.

There was in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were *now* well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense, when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt

call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him, in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God: and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And behold thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out he could not speak unto them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. And it came to pass, that as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

How amiable is the character of this pious pair, who were found *walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless!* May our behaviour be thus unblameable, and our obedience thus sincere and universal! And let those whose office leads them nearer to God than others, remember the peculiar obligation to imitate such an example.

Let us observe, with pleasure, that the *prayers* which such worshippers offer *come up with acceptance* before God; to whom

no costly perfume is so sweet as the fragrance of a character like this.—*An answer of peace* was here returned when the case seemed to be most helpless. Let us learn to *wait patiently for the Lord,* and leave it to his own infinite wisdom to choose the time and manner in which he shall appear for us.

Zacharias, accustomed as he was to converse with the God of heaven, was, nevertheless, as we see, thrown into great consternation at the *appearance* of his angelic messenger. And may we not regard it, therefore, as an instance of the goodness as well as wisdom of God, that he determines that the services which these heavenly spirits render us should be generally invisible?—It is delightful to observe that amiable condescension with which *Gabriel,* the courtier of heaven, behaved on this occasion. Let it teach us with pleasure to pursue the humblest offices of duty and love which God may assign us towards any of our fellow-servants, even in the lowest station.

Happy was the holy *Baptist* in being employed in this blessed work of preparing men's hearts to receive a Saviour, and reducing *the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.* May we be inspired with some degree of zeal like his, in our proper sphere, to pursue so noble a design.

We see in the instance of *Zacharias,* that some remainders of *unbelief* may be found even in a faithful heart: let us guard against them, as remembering they will be displeasing to God, and hurtful to ourselves.—And, to conclude, when Providence favours us with any peculiarly gracious interpositions, let us attentively remark the hand of God in them; and let religious *retirement* leave room for serious recollection and devout acknowledgements.

SECTION III.

Luke i. 26—38.

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God, unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name *was* Mary. And the angel came in unto her and said, Hail! thou that art highly favoured, the Lord *is* with thee: blessed *art* thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind, what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her Fear

not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel. How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

With what holy wonder and pleasure should we trace this notice of an *incarnate Redeemer!* and how thankfully should we adore his condescending goodness, that for us men, and for our salvation, he did not despise the womb of so obscure a *virgin?*

We too are ready in our thoughts, with *Gabriel*, to congratulate her on so distinguished an honour, and to say, as one did to *Christ* in the days of his flesh, *Blessed is the womb that bare thee* O Lord, *and the breasts which thou hast sucked!* (Luke xi. 27.) But let us remember there is yet a nobler *blessedness* than this attending those, in whose hearts he is so formed by divine grace, that they *hear his word and do it.*

☞ Let us hear with joy, that he is *Jesus* the Saviour; but let us also consider that he is Christ the anointed Sovereign, who is to rule over God's people for ever. Remember, O my soul that *of his kingdom there shall be no end;* and esteem it thine unspeakable honour and happiness to be enrolled amongst his faithful subjects.

The glories promised to such in the future state are so far beyond experince, or even imagination, that they might, to sense, appear as incredible as the message which Mary received: but let us remember the eternal truth of what Gabriel suggested to her, that *nothing is impossible to God.* He can therefore ripen our

imperfect souls to all the improvement and pleasures of the heavenly state, as easily as he produces the meanest vegetable on the earth.

Let the temper of the blessed *virgin* on this great occasion, be therefore the beautiful model of ours: so when the purposes of the Divine Love are declared to us, we may resign ourselves unto the Lord: and with such calm tranquillity, firm faith, and joyful acquiescence, may wait the accomplishment of his gracious promise, and say, *Behold the servants of the Lord! be it unto us according to his word!* So do thou, O Lord, animate and support us! and the weakest of thy children shall not stumble at the greatest of thy promises *through unbelief;* but, *being strong in faith,* shall *give glory to God.*

SECTION IV.

Luke i. 39—56.

And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Juda, and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb: and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed *art* thou among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb. And whence *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed *is* she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things and holy *is* his name. And his mercy *is* on them that fear him, from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm, he hath

scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in rememberance of *his* mercy, as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. And Mary abode with her three months, and returned to her own house.

How natural it is for those, who have themselves received mercy of the Lord, to communicate their joy to others, and to seek the society of their *fellow saints*, whom he hath honoured with the signal manifestations of his favour? Happy are they, whose friendship is confirmed and heightened by such endearing ties! And thrice happy the humble and generous souls, who can thus, like *Elisabeth*, lose the thoughts of private honour and interest in a cordial concern for the glory of God and the good of men; *rejoicing* to see others, perhaps in some respects their *inferiors*, raised to stations of service more distinguished than their own!

If this pious matron thought herself so highly honoured in receiving a *visit* from *the mother* of our *infant Saviour*, how much more doth it become us to admire the condescension of our glorious *Lord*, that he will represent himself as graciously *knocking at the door* of our hearts, and ready not only to make us a transient *visit*, but to take up his stated abode with us?

May our faith, like that of the *blessed virgin*, delightfully rest on all the promises he makes, as firmly believing that *there shall be an accomplishment of these things which are spoken!* And while that accomplishment is delayed, may the pleasing expectation of it tune our voice to a *song of praise* like her's—Let *our souls* also *magnify the Lord*, and *our spirits rejoice* in that *God* whom we hope, through grace, to be *our Saviour*; whose condescension hath *regarded* us in such low circumstances; and whose almighty power and everlasting love *have done* such *great things* for us.—He hath provided heavenly food, to satisfy our *hungry souls;* and hath raised us to *enjoy the mercies* which, in more obscure intimations only, he *promised to the* pious *patriarchs.—His mercy* is on all that *fear him*, through succeeding generations.—May such distinguished favours animate our hearts with those sentiments of devotion and zeal which they are so well qualified to excite! otherwise the joy of the *Old Testament Saints*, in the distant and imperfect prospect of these blessings, will testify against our insensibitity in the superior advantages with which we are favoured.

SECTION V.

Matthew i. 18—25.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.) Then Joseph being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not, till she had brought forth her first-born son.

We see here, in *Joseph*, an excellent pattern of gentleness and prudence. In an affair which appeared dubious, he chose, as we should always do, rather to err on the favourable, than on the severe extreme. He was careful to avoid any precipitate steps; and in the moments of deliberation, God interposes to guide and determine his resolves.

With what wonder and pleasure did Joseph receive these glad tidings! With what pleasure should we also receive them! For we too are informed of Jesus who came to save his people from their sins. An important and glorious salvation indeed! Hosanna to him that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed Jesus! answer thy character in delivering us, not only from sin's condemning, but from its reigning power!

Let our souls bow to Emmanuel, our incarnate God; and, while with holy wonder we survey the various scenes of his humiliation, let us remember too his native dignity and his divine glory.

By him God hath fulfilled his ancient promises in the most ample and glorious manner, in the fullnes of time sending forth his Son, made of a woman, and sprung like a tender shoot from the decayed stock of David his servant.

While we study the oracles of the Old Testament, let us with pleasure trace the notices of the great Messiah there, even of Jesus, to whom all the prophets give witness. May his name be ever inscribed upon our hearts. In that name may we lift up our banners, and judge those reproaches a glory which we may meet with in his sacred cause!

SECTION VI.

Luke i. 57—66.

Now Elisabeth's full time came, that she should be delivered, and she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not *so;* but he shall be called John.—And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, His name is John, and they marvelled all.—And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue *loosed*, and he spake, and praised God. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill-country of Judea. And all they that heard *them*, laid *them* up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.

So sure are the promises of God, and so certainly will the *full accomplishment* of them another day shame our suspicious unbelieving hearts, and awaken the tongues of servants to *songs of praise!* Happy the souls who, by a lively faith in them, are anticipating that blessed day, and whose minds, kept in tune by

these pleasing views, are opening themselves to the most tender sympathy with others, and, like the *kindred* of this pious pair, are making the religious joys of others their own; so sharing, rather than envying the superior favours bestowed upon them!

Let us learn with them, wisely to *observe* what God is doing around us and *to lay up* remarkable occurrences *in our hearts:* that, by comparing one step of divine conduct with another, we may the better *understand the loving-kindness of the Lord*, and be engaged to act with more regular obedience in a holy subserviency to his gracious purposes.

When, like good *Zacharias* and *Elisabeth*, we have the pleasure to see our infant offspring growing up in safety and cheerfulness, with healthy constitutions of body and towardly dispositions of mind too, let us ascribe it to *the hand of the Lord*, which is *upon them for good.* Let us remember that we are at best but the instruments of the divine care and favour to them; and that our families would soon become scenes of desolation, did not God watch over them in a thousand circumstances of danger and distress, which no prudence of ours could have foreseen, and which no care of ours could have been able to provide against.

SECTION VII.

Luke i. 67—80.

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited, and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David; as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us. To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou child shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their

sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

With what sacred joy should we join in this hymn of praise! The blessings celebrated in it were not peculiar to the family of Zacharias or to the house of Israel; but we, through Divine goodness, have our share in them: the Lord God of Israel hath visited and redeemed us. He hath remembered his covenant with the pious patriarchs in favour of millions who are their seed only as heirs of the faith of Abraham. To us hath he accomplished the words he had spoken by his holy prophets, and through his tender mercies hath caused the Sun of Righteousness to arise upon us; upon us who were once indeed sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death; and whose ancestors, for many succeeding generations, were lost in ignorance, idolatry, and wickedness. Let us bless the Lord who hath given us light, and make it our daily prayer that it may be the happy means of guiding our feet into the way of peace. Let us, with pleasure and thankfulness, receive the knowledge of salvation by the remission of our sins without which we shall never see it but at an unapproachable distance.

Let us repose our cheerful confidence in this almighty Saviour, this Horn of Salvation, which God's own right hand hath raised up for us; through him let us seek the pardon of our sins, and deliverance from all the enemies of our souls. And let a grateful sense of his redeeming love engage us resolutely to walk in the strictest holiness and righteousness, as in the presence of God, and carefully to maintain before him a conscience void of offence all the days of our lives.

May we carry this temper along with us into solitude and retirement: may it animate us in the busiest scenes of life; and, in every particular instance, may it determine us in our choice of either and regulate our conduct in both!

SECTION VIII.

Luke ii. 1—21.

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Agustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made

when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David,) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes lying in a manger. And, suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them, into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard *it*, wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things

that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, Joseph called his name JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

With what humble amazement should we contemplate this first appearance of our Incarnate Redeemer! Surely all the angels of heaven might justly have admired his condescension in assuming such a nature as ours and wearing a mortal frame, though it had been attended with all the ornaments and splendours earth could have given it. Though at his entrance into our low world, he had been born of an imperial family placed under a canopy of velvet and gold, or laid to repose on pillows of down, all this had been deep abasement in the eyes of those who had beheld the glories of his celestial throne and the honours paid to him by *cherubim* and *seraphim;* but, behold, the Son of God, and the Heir of all things, is not merely in the abodes of *men*, but in a place destined for *beasts;* and, while *wrapped in swaddling clothes*, is *laid in a manger!*

Yet, O, blessed Jesus how much more venerable was that *stable* and *manger*, when graced with thy sacred presence, than the most magnificent palace, or most shining throne of earthly princes! How ill doth it become thy disciples to *seek for themselves great things* in this life, or to be proud of its pomp and grandeur! Give us, O God, the simplicity of children, and make us willing to be *conformed* to the *birth* of thy Son as well as to *his death!*

Yet, mean as *his birth* might appear, his Heavenly Father did not leave him without witness. We see him, in this wonderful account that the *Evangelist* hath given us, surrounded with a brighter lustre than a court or a crown could have afforded. *Angelic legions* are employed as herelds to proclaim the newborn King. And to whom are they sent? To humble pious *shepherds*, diligently employed in the duties of their proper calling, and *watching by night* for the security of their flocks. Who would not gladly have shared in their poverty and fatigue, to have heard with them these *good tidings of great joy?*

Let us observe with what delight these courtiers of heaven undertook the happy embassy to these lowly mortals. Let us with pleasure attend to the *anthem* of these benevolent spirits. Far from envying the favour that was done us, they ascribe *glory to God* for it, and take their part in the joy they gave. Let this love of the whole *heavenly host* to us awaken our love to them and our longing for that blessed world where we and they shall surround our dearest Redeemer, not in such a form of abasement

as that in which he here appeared, but clothed in that celestial lustre with which God hath rewarded the humiliations of *the manger* and *the cross.*

In the mean time let our more intimate concern in this great salvation engage us more cordially to join with these blessed *angels* in their *hallelujahs;* ascribing *glory to God in the highest* for this *peace on earth,* this *good-will towards men,* the great fountain of our present tranquillity and future hope! Above all, if Divine Grace hath conquered all the foolish prejudices of our hearts against *Christ,* and taught us with humble faith to apply to him, let us, with the *shepherds, bless God for the things* which have been shewn us, and make it our care to *spread abroad* the savour of his name, that others may join with us in paying their homage and their praises to him!

SECTION IX.

Matthew i. 1—17.

(*The Genealogy relating to Joseph.*)

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren. And Judas begat Pharez and Zara of Thamar, and Pharez begat Esrom, and Esrom begat Aram, and Aram begat Aminadab, and Aminadab begat Naasson, and Naasson begat Salmon. And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab, and Booz begat Obed of Ruth, and Obed begat Jesse. And Jesse begat David the king, and David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Urias. And Solomon begat Roboam, and Roboam begat Abia, and Abia begat Asa. And Asa begat Josaphat, and Josaphat begat Joram, and Joram begat Ozias. And Ozias begat Joatham, and Joatham begat Achaz, and Achaz begat Ezekias. And Ezekias begat Manasses, and Manasses begat Amon, and Amon begat Josias. And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias

begat Salathiel, and Salathiel begat Zerobabel. And Zerobabel begat Abiud, and Abiud begat Eliakim, and Eliakim begat Azor. And Azor begat Sadoc, and Sadoc begat Achim, and Achim begat Eliud. And Eliud begat Eleazar, and Eleazar begat Matthan, and Matthan begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David, *are* fourteen generations; and from David, until the carrying away into Babylon, *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon, unto Christ, *are* fourteen generations.

Luke iii. 23—38.

(*The Genealogy relating to Mary.*)

Jesus being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was *the son* of Heli, which was *the son* of Matthat, which was *the son* of Levi, which was *the son* of Melchi, which was *the son* of Janna, which was *the son* of Joseph, which was *the son* of Matthias, which was *the son* of Amos, which was *the son* of Naum, which was *the son* of Esli, which was *the son* of Nagge, which was *the son* of Maath, which was *the son* of Mattathias, which was *the son* of Semei, which was *the son* of Joseph, which was *the son* of Juda, which was *the son* of Joanna, which was *the son* of Rhesa, which was *the son* of Zerobabel, which was *the son* of Salathiel, which was *the son* of Neri, which was *the son* of Melchi, which was *the son* of Addi, which was *the son* of Cosam, which was *the son* of Elmodam, which was *the son* of Er, which was *the son* of Jose, which was *the son* of Eliezer, which was *the son* of Jorim, which was *the son* of Matthat, which was *the son* of Levi, which was *the son* of Simeon, which was *the son* of Juda, which was *the son* of Joseph, which was *the son* of Jonan, which was *the son* of Eliakim, which was *the son* of Melea, which was *the son* of Menan, which was *the son* of Mattatha,

which was *the son* of Nathan, which was *the son* of David, which was *the son* of Jesse, which was *the son* of Obed, which was *the son* of Booz, which was *the son* of Salmon, which was *the son* of Naasson, which was *the son* of Aminadab, which was *the son* of Aram, which was *the son* of Esrom, which was *the son* of Pharez, which was *the son* of Juda, which was *the son* of Jacob, which was *the son* of Isaac, which was *the son* of Abraham, which was *the son* of Thara, which was *the son* of Nachor, which was *the son* of Saruch, which was *the son* of Ragau, which was *the son* of Phalec, which was *the son* of Heber, which was *the son* of Sala, which was *the son* of Cainan, which was *the son* of Arphaxad, which was *the son* of Sem, which was *the son* of Noe, which was *the son* of Lamech, which was *the son* of Mathusala, which was *the son* of Enoch, which was *the son* of Jared, which was *the son* of Maleleel, which was *the son* of Cainan, which was *the son* of Enos, which was *the son* of Seth, which was *the son* of Adam, which was *the son* of God.

When we survey any such series of generations, it is obvious to reflect how *like the leaves of a tree, one passeth away and another cometh ;* yet *the earth still abideth*, and with it the goodness of the Lord, which runs on from generation to generation, the common hope of parents and children.

Of those who formerly lived upon earth, and perhaps made the most conspicuous figure among the children of men, how many have there been whose *names* have perished with them! and how many of whom nothing but their *names* are remaining! Thus are *we* passing away, and thus shall we be shortly forgotten. Happy if, while we are forgotten of men, we are remembered by God, and our *names* are found *written in the book of life!* There they will make a much brighter appearance than in the records of fame, or than they would do even in such a catalogue of those who were related to *Christ according to the flesh* ; whose memory is here preserved, when that of many, who were once the wonder and terror of the mighty in the land of the living, is lost in perpetual oblivion.

We observe, among these ancestors of *Christ*, some that were *Heathens*, and others that, on different accounts, were of *infamous characters ;* and perhaps it might be the design of Providence that we should learn from it, or at least should, on reading it, take occasion to reflect that persons of all nations, and even *the chief of sinners*

amongst them, are encouraged to trust in him as their Saviour. *To him* therefore let us *look* even from *the ends of the earth*, yea, from the depths of guilt and distress, and the consequence will be happy beyond all expression or conception.

Adam, though originally *the son of God*, lost that inheritance of life and glory, which, in consequence of such a relation he might reasonably have expected; but the *second Adam* repairs the loss which we had sustained by the transgression of the *first*. We are now *predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ*, and raised by him to the hope of a fairer inheritance than the terrestrial Paradise. Let it be our daily labour to secure this invaluable blessing; that so, as we have *borne the image of the earthly Adam*, we may in due time *bear the image of the heavenly*, and at length attain to the perfect *manifestation of the sons of God.*

SECTION X.

Luke ii. 22—39.

And when the days of the purification of Mary according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Jesus to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord; (as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice, according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name *was* Simeon; and the same *was* just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Jsrael: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles,

and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against, (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be reveald.

And there was one Anna a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity: and she *was* a widow of about four-score and four years which departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fasting and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

Who can behold the pious *Simeon*, thus *welcoming death*, whilst he *embraced his Saviour*, without wishing to pass over the intermediate moments of life to meet so peaceful a dissolution? May we, like him, approve ourselves the faithful servants of God; and then we may hope that, when our *dismission* comes, we shall share in his serenity and joy!

We may comfortably expect it, if our eyes are now opened to behold with wonder and delight the great *salvation* he has *prepared* for his people; and if our hearts, with our lips, are frequently praising him for this *light* which he hath given *to lighten the Gentiles* as well as to be *the glory of his people Israel.*

As such may *Christ* be universally owned and adored, both by *Jews* and *Gentiles!* In the mean time, while he is set up *as a mark of contradiction* and contempt, let us not be *ashamed* of him or of his words: but rather let those indignities which are offered to him be as *a sword* to *pierce through* our own souls! Let us remember that the gospel, with all the difficulties which attended it, is the great touch-stone by which God will try the characters of all to whom it comes! May our ready acceptance of it, and our zealous adherence to that sacred cause, approve the humble sincerity with which we inquire into its evidence; that *Christ* may not be to us *a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence*, but rather

the means of raising us to God and happiness, even to that *redemption* for which they that wait shall never be ashamed!

Our circumstances in life are various: there are comparatively few who have such leisure for extraordinary devotion as was the privilege of the pious *Anna:* where it is found, let it be valued and improved: but how great and how many soever our engagements and entanglements in life may be, let the care of our souls be still our chief concern. Let us be *serving God* in one sense or another, *night and day;* with *prayers*, pouring out our souls before him morning and evening; and at proper seasons adding *fasting* to prayer, and public solemnities to private retirement.

To conclude: let the example of these *aged saints* impress and animate those, whose *hoary heads*, like theirs, are a *crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness.* (Prov. xvi. 31.) Let those venerable lips, so soon to be silent in the grave, be now employed in shewing forth the praises of their Redeemer. *Surely days should speak, and the multitude of years should teach,* such *wisdom.* (Job xxii. 7.) Such *fruit* may they produce *in old age;* and may they have the pleasure *to* see all these pious attempts most thankfully received by the *rising generation*, and most gratefully improved by them; that they may quit the world with the greater tranquillity, in the view of leaving those behind them to whom *Christ* shall be as *precious* as he has been to them, and who will be *waiting* for God's *salvation*, while they are gone to *enjoy* it! Amen.

SECTION XI.

Matthew ii. 1—12.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king heard *these things* he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, in Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet; And thou Bethlehem *in* the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child, and when you have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed, and lo! the star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him: And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream, that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Let us observe, with pleasure, this farther honour which God did to his *only begotten Son* in ordering a *new star* to appear as the signal of his birth, and in calling these *illustrious persons* from afar to pay their early adorations to him. No doubt they thought such a discovery, as brought them to the feet of their *Infant Saviour*, an ample recompence for all the fatigue and expense of such a journey. *They were exceedingly transported when they saw the star.* So let us sejoice in every thing which may be a means of leading our souls to *Christ*, and of disposing us to cast ourselves down before him with humility and self-resignation!

Let us look upon this circumstance of the sacred story as a beautiful emblem of that more glorious state of the Christian when *the Gentiles shall come to its light*, and sages *and kings to the brightness of its rising:* when *the abundance of the sea shall be converted to it, and the wealth of the Gentiles* shall be consecrated to its honor. *The multitude of camels shall cover it, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord.* Isa. lx. 3, 5, 6.

How wonderful was the honour conferred upon so obscure a town as *Bethlehem* when it was made thus illustrious among *the thousands of Judah!* Happy they who consecrate not only their *gold* and their other possessions, but also their *souls* and their *bodies* to their *great Ruler*, whose office it is to *feed and govern the Israel of God:* under whose conduct and care they shall receive

blessings infinitely more valuable than all the treasures of the *east* or the *west!*

But oh, the fatal power of carnal influence on the heart! This engaged *Herod* to receive the news of the Redeemer's birth *with horror;* and with execrable cruelty and vile hypocrisy, to contrive his murder under the specious form of *doing him homage.* Vain and self-confounding artifice! Let us rejoice in the thought, that *there is no understanding, or wisdom, or counsel against the Lord:* no scheme so artfully disguised that he cannot penetrate it, or so politically formed that he cannot with infinite ease confound it.

To what perplexity and grief might these *sages* have been brought had they been made even the innocent instruments of an assault on this *Holy Child!* But God delivered them from such an alarm, and happily guided their return; so that, through his care and favour, they carried home, in the tidings of the new-born *Messiah,* far richer treasures than they had left behind. Thus shall they, who *in all their ways acknowledge God,* by one method or another find that he will *graciously direct their paths.*

SECTION XII.

Matthew ii. 13—23.

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child, and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was that fulfilled which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation and weeping,

and great mourning, Rachel weeping, *for* her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea, in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

What is our fallen nature, that it can be capable of such enormities as we have now been surveying! or what imaginable circumstances of grandeur and power can free the mind of an ambitious creature from servitude and misery! Who can behold *Herod* under the agitation of such a barbarous rage, and not see the vanity even of royal dignity, when the man that sways the sceptre over others *hath no rule over his own spirit?* Surely none of the innocent victims of *Herod's* wrath felt so much from the sword of their barbarous murderers as the guilty mind of the tyrant from its own unnatural transports.

The indignation which arises in our minds on the view of so much wickedness, finds a secret satisfaction in this thought. But how griveous is it to reflect on what the *parents* of these poor babes felt while *the sword* that murdered their children in their very sight *pierced through* their own bowels! *Happy*, in comparison with these, were *the wombs that never bare and the paps that never gave suck!* Let parents remember how soon their dearest hopes may be turned into lamentation, and learn to moderate their expectation from their infant offspring and check too fond a delight in them.

Let us learn to be very thankful that we are not under the arbitrary power of a *tyrant*, whose sallies of distracted fury might spread desolation through houses and provinces. Let us not say, Where was the great Regent of the universe when such a horrible butchery was transacted? His all-wise counsels knew how to bring good out of all the evil of it. The agony of a few moments transmitted these oppressed innocents to peace and joy; while the impotent rage of *Herod* only heaped on his own head guilt,

infamy, and horror. *He conceived mischief, and he brought forth vanity,* (Job xv. 35.) and while he studied to prevent the establishment of the *Messiah's* kingdom, and *set himself* with impious rage *against the Lord, and against his Anointed, He that sitteth in the heavens did laugh,* yea, *the Lord had him in derision.* (Psalm ii. 2, 4.) That God, who discerns every secret purpose of his enemies, and foresees every intended assault, knows how, whenever he pleases, by a thought, by a *dream,* to baffle it.

The preservation of the holy child *Jesus* in *Egypt* may be considered as a figure of God's care over his church in its greatest danger. God doth not often, as he easily could, strike their persecutors with immediate destruction; but he provides a *hiding place* for his people, and, by methods not less effectual, though less pompous, preserves his chosen seed from being swept away, even when *the enemy comes in like a flood.*

Egypt, that was once the seat of persecution and oppression to the *Israel of God,* is now a refuge to *his Son;* and thus all places will be to us what Divine providence will be pleased to make them. When, like *Joseph* and *Mary,* we are cut off from the worship of his temple and perhaps removed into a strange land, he can be *a little sanctuary* to us, and give us, in his gracious presence, a rich equivalent for all that we have lost.

They continued here till he gave the signal for their departure. Let us, in like manner, remember that it is God's part to direct and ours to obey; nor can we be out of the way of safety and of comfort while we are following his directions, and steering our course by the intimations of his pleasure!

Jesus survived his persecutors, and returned into the land of *Israel* again; but such was his condescension, that he abode at *Nazareth,* which seems to have been allotted to him as the most humble station. Let us never be unwilling to *bear reproach* for him, who from his infancy endured it for us; nor take offence at the meanness of his condition, whose removes were directed by angelic messengers, as immediate envoys from the God of heaven.

SECTION XIII.

Luke ii. 40—52.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve

years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not *of it*. But they supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man.

Let us, who are *heads of families*, take occasion from the story before us to renew our resolutions that *we and our house will serve the Lord*; and remember that it is a part of our duty, not only to God but to our domestics, to engage them with us in his public worship; the pleasures of which will surely be increased when we see them, and, especially our dear *children*, joining with us in attendance on our great common Father.

Let *children* view the example of the *holy child Jesus* with an humble desire to copy after it. Let them love the house and ordinances of God and thirst for the instructions of his good word. Let them think themselves happy if his *servants in the ministry* will bestow a part of their important time in those exercises which are especially suited for their instruction; and let them not only be careful to return the properest *answers* they can, but at convenient times, with modesty and respect, *ask such questions* as may be likely to improve them in knowledge and grace.

Let those *children*, whose genius is most promising and most admired, learn from the blessed *Jesus* to behave themselves in an

humble and submissive manner to all their elders and especially to their *parents ;* for though he was *the Lord of all*, yet was he *subject* not only to *Mary* his real *mother*, but to *Joseph*, though only supposed to be his *father*. Such *children* may well hope that the *grace of God* will still be *upon them;* and, *growing in wisdom* as they do in *stature*, they will also advance *in favour with God and men*, and be the darlings of heaven as well as of earth.

And, oh, that the greatest and wisest of us, those of the longest standing and of the most eminent stations in the church, might learn of this admirable and divine child; that, always remembering our relation to God, and ever intent on learning his will and promoting his glory, we might, with humble acquiescence, accommodate ourselves to all the disposals of his providence! How easily could he, who discovered such early marks of a sublime genius and a lively wit, have relished the most elegant delights of science and have eclipsed all the most celebrated poets, orators, and philosophers of that learned and polite age! But he laid all those views aside, that he might pursue the duties of that humble rank of life which his *heavenly Father's* infinite wisdom had assigned him; and joined, as it would seem, to assist in maintaining himself and his parents too by the daily labour of his hands. Let us learn from hence, that it is the truest greatness of soul to know our own place and office, and to deny ourselves those amusements of the mind, as well as those gratifications of the senses, which are inconsistent with the proper services of our different relations and callings.

PART II.

MATTHEW III. IV. V. VII. VIII. 1.—4, 14—17, IX. 2—8.—MARK I. II. 1—22.—LUKE III. 1—23. IV. V.

IN WHICH IS CONTAINED THE PERIOD OF EIGHTEEN MONTHS, FROM THE BEGINNING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST'S PREACHING, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE YEAR TWENTY-SIX, TO THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR'S PREACHING OF OUR LORD, IN THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR TWENTY-EIGHT.

SECTION I.

John i. 1—18.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that light. *That* was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of him and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

Justly hath our Redeemer said, *Blessed is the man that is not offended in me;* and we may peculiarly apply the words to that great and glorious doctrine of *the deity of Christ*, which is here before us. A thousand high and curious thoughts will naturally arise in our corrupt hearts on this view of it; but may Divine Grace subdue them all to the obedience of an humble faith; so that, with Thomas, we may each of us fall down at his feet, and cry out with sincere and unreserved devotion, *My Lord and my God!*

Let us adore him as the Creator and Preserver of all, the overflowing fountain of *light and life*. Let us with unutterable pleasure hail this *Sun of righteousness*, whose rays *by the tender mercies* of the Father, have *visited* our benighted world to *guide our feet into the way of peace;* and while we lament that *the darkness* hath not *apprehended* and received him, let us earnestly pray that he may ere long penetrate every cloud of ignorance and mist of error, and may diffuse among all the nations knowledge and grace, purity and joy. Let us especially pray that he may penetrate our beclouded souls; and that they may, in holy correspondence to the purposes of his appearing, be *turned as clay to the seal.* Job xxxviii. 14.—*The world knew him not;* but may we know him, and give him that honourable and grateful reception which so great a favour may justly demand!—Yet what returns can be proportionable to his condescension *in becoming flesh* for us, and *pitching his tabernacle* among miserable and sinful mortals?—Happy apostles that *beheld his glory!* And surely there are in his word such reflections of it as we may also *behold*, and as will oblige us to acknowlegde it to be *a glory* that *became the Only-begotten of the Father.*

Let us cordially receive him *as full of grace and truth*, that we also may stand entitled to the privileges of *God's children.* And if we are already of that happy number, let us not arrogate the glory of it to ourselves, or ascribe it entirely to those who have been the instruments of this important change; but remember that *of his own will God hath begotten us by the word of his power*, and that *of him we are of Christ Jesus;* to him then let us refer the ultimate praise, if that divine and almighty Saviour be *made unto us wisdom and righteousnes and sanctification and redemption.* 1 Cor. i. 30.

Happy are they that, (like this beloved *apostle*,) when they hear the praises of *Christ* uttered by others, can echo back the testimomy from their own experience, as having themselves *received of his fulness!* May an abundance of *grace* be communicated from him to us! We are not *straitened* in him; oh, may

we not be *straitened* in ourselves; but daily renewing our application to him as our Living Head, may vital influences be continually imparted to our souls from him!

With pleasure let us compare the dispensation of *Jesus* with that of *Moses*, and observe the excellency of its superior *grace* and of its brighter *truth;* but let us remember, as a necessary consequence of this, that *if the despisers of Moses's law died without mercy, they shall be thought worthy of a much sorer punishment* and a more aggravated condemnation *who tread under foot the Son of God.* Heb. x. 28, 29.

May we ever regard him *as the Only-Begotten of the Father;* and, since he hath condescended so far as to come down from his very *bosom* to instruct us in his nature and will, let us with all humility receive his dictates and earnestly pray, that under his revelations and teachings, we may so *know God* as fully to serve him now, and at length, eternally to enjoy him.

SECTION II.

Matt. iii. 1—4.—Mark i. 2—4.—Luke iii. 1—6.

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip, tetrarch of Iturea, and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness of Judea. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. As it is written in the prophets, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a girdle of a skin about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

It is surely matter of unspeakable thankfulness that the *kingdom of heaven* should be erected among men! that the great God should condescend so far as to take to himself a people from our mean and sinful world, and appoint his own *Son* to be the governor of that *kingdom!* How happy are we that it is preached among us and we are called into it! Let it be our great care that we be not only nominal but real members of it.

For this purpose let us remember and consider that, to become the subjects of this kingdom, we are to enter it by the way of *repentance;* humbly *confessing our sins,* and resolutely forsaking them, if we do indeed desire to find mercy.

Let us bless God, both for the promises of *pardon* and for the appointment of the *seals* of it, particularly of *baptismal washing;* always remembering the obligation it brings upon us to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* 2 Cor. vii. 1.

And, being ourselves become members of *Christ's kingdom,* let us pray that it may be every where extended. May Divine Grace remove every obstruction, and make *a free course* for his gospel, that it may every where *run and be glorified,* so that *all flesh may see the salvation of God!*

SECTION III.

Matt. iii. 5—12.—Mark i. 7—8.—Luke iii. 7—20.

Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all the land of Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root

of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth, and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages. And as the people were in expectation, and all *men* mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. And many other things in *his* exhortation preached he unto the people. But Herod the tetrarch being reproved by John for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

What an excellent pattern of ministerial service does *John* exhibit in the passage before us! Blessed is that *gospel preacher* who, like him, seeks not his own ease and pleasure and indulges not too luxurious and sensual inclinations, but cheerfully accommodates himself to the state and circumstances which Providence hath assigned him, as infinitely more intent on the success of his ministry than on any little interest of his own that can interfere with it!—Happy the man who, imitating the impartiality of this faithful servant of God, *giveth* to every one *his portion of meat in due season*, and abhors the thoughts of flattering men in their

vices or buoying them up with delusive hopes in their birth and profession, while they are destitute of real and vital religion!

May this plain and awakening address be felt by every soul that hears it! And, in particular, let the *children* of religious parents, let those that enjoy the most eminent privileges and that make even the strictest profession, weigh themselves in this *balance of the sanctuary*, lest they be *found wanting* in the awful decisive day. And if the warnings of the gospel have alarmed our hearts, and puts us upon *fleeing from the wrath to come*, oh, let *the terrors of the Lord* engage us not only to *confess* but to *forsake* our sins, and to *bring forth fruits meet for repentance!*

Let all, to whom the gospel message comes, most attentively and seriously consider in what alarming circumstances of danger and extremity impenitent sinners are here represented. The *gospel* is the last dispensation we must ever expect; *the axe* is *at the root of the* unfruitful *tree*, and it must ere long be *cut down* and *burnt*, be its branches ever so diffusive and its leaves ever so green.

Christ hath *a fan in his hand* to winnow *us*, as well as the *Jews*. O that we may stand the trial! And O that, as his *wheat*, we may be laid up in the store-house of heaven when *that day cometh* which shall *burn as an oven*, and when *all that do wickedly* shall be consumed as *stubble*, and be *burnt up as chaff!* Mal. iv. 1.

And to conclude: that we may be prepared for that final trial, let us be earnest in our applications to our gracious Redeemer, that as we are *baptized with water* in his name, he would also *baptize us with the Holy Ghost and with fire;* that, by the operations of his Holy Spirit on our cold and stupid hearts, he would enkindle and quicken that Divine life, that sacred love, that flaming, yet well-governed zeal for his glory, which distinguishes the true Christian from the hypocritical professor, and is indeed *the seal of God* set upon the heart to mark it for eternal happiness.

SECTION IV.

Matthew iii. 13—17.—Mark i. 9—11.—Luke iii. 21—23.

It came to pass in those days, when all the people were baptized, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus

answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And he was baptized of John in Jordan. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and praying. And lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God, in a bodily shape, descending like a dove, and lighting upon him. And lo, a voice came from heaven, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age.

Let our Lord's submitting himself to *baptism* teach us a holy exactness and care in the observance of those positive institutions which owe their obligations merely to a Divine command; for *thus it* also *becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;* lest by *breaking one of the least* of Christ's *commandments, and teaching others to do it,* we become unworthy of a part *in the kingdom of heaven.* (Matt. v. 19.)

Jesus had *no sin* to confess or wash away, yet he was *baptized;* and God owned that ordinance so far as to make it the season of pouring forth *the Spirit* upon him. And where can we expect this sacred effusion, but in a conscientious and humble attendance on Divine appointments?

Let us remember in how distinguishing a sense *Jesus* is *the Christ,* the *annointed of God,* to whom *the Father hath not given the Spirit by measure,* but hath poured it out upon him in the most abundant degree. Let us trace the workings of this *Spirit in Jesus,* not only as a Spirit of miraculous power, but of the richest grace and holiness; earnestly praying that this *holy unction* may, from *Christ* our head, *descend* upon our souls! May his enlivening *Spirit* kindle its sacred flame there with such vigour that *many waters* may not be able to *quench it,* nor *floods* of temptation and corruption to *drown it.*

Behold God's *beloved Son in whom he is well pleased!* As such let us honour and love him; and, as such, let our souls acquiesce in him, as, in every respect, such a *Saviour* as our wishes might have asked and our necessities required.

With what amazement should we reflect upon it that the blessed *Jesus,* though so early ripened for the most extensive services, should live in retirement even till his *thirtieth year!* That he deferred his *ministry* so long should teach us not to thrust ourselves forward to public stations till we are qualified for them, and plainly discover a Divine call; that he deferred it no longer should be an engagement to us to avoid unnecessary delays, and to give God the prime and vigour of our life.

Our Great *Master* attained not, as it seems, to the conclusion

of his *thirty-fifth year*, if he so much as entered upon it; yet what glorious achievements did he accomplish within these narrow limits of time! Happy that servant who, with any proportionable zeal, dispatches the great business of life! so much the more happy if his *sun go down at noon;* for the space that is taken from the labours of time will be added to the rewards of eternity.

SECTION V.

Matthew iv. 1—11.—Mark i. 12—13.—Luke iv. 1—13.

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And he was there in the wilderness with the wild beasts, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungered. And when the tempter, the devil, came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee to keep thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, in a moment of time: and saith unto him, All these things, and all this power, and the glory of them, will I give

thee; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou therefore wilt fall down and worship me, all these things will I give thee, and all shall be thine. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee behind me Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then when the devil had ended all the temptation, he leaveth him, and departed from him for a season. And behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Who can read this account without amazement, when he compares the insolence and malice of the *prince of darkness* with the condescension and grace of the *Son of God!*

What was it that animated and emboldened *Satan* to undertake such a work? Was it the easy victory he had obtained over the *first Adam* in Paradise? or was it the remembrance of his *own fall*, from whence he arrogantly concluded that no heart could stand against the temptations of pride and ambition? Could he, who afterwards proclaimed *Christ* to be *the Son of the Most High God*, and had perhaps but lately heard him owned as such by *a voice from heaven*, make any doubt of his Divinity? Or, if he actually believed it, could he expect to vanquish him? We may rather conclude that he did not expect it; but mad with rage and despair, he was determined at least to worry that *Lamb of God* which he knew he could not devour; and to vex with his hellish suggestions, that innocent and holy soul which he knew he could never seduce. Wretched degeneracy! *How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning!* to be thus eagerly driving on thine own repulse and disgrace!

But, on the other hand, how highly are we obliged to our Great Deliverer, who hath brought forth *meat out of the eater*, and *sweetness out of the strong!* who can sufficiently adore thy condescension, *O blessed Jesus?* who wouldst permit thyself to be thus assaulted and led from place to place by an *infernal spirit*, whom thou couldest in a moment have remanded to hell to be bound *in chains of darkness* and overwhelmed with flaming ruin!

The *apostle* tells us why he permitted this: it was *that having himself suffered, being tempted, he might* by this experience that he had of *Satan's* subtilty, and of the strength of his temptations, contract an additional tenderness and *be* the more inclined, as well as better *able to succour us* when *we are tempted.* (Heb. ii. 18.) Let this embolden us to *come unto the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need.* (Heb. iv. 16.)

Let us remember and imitate the conduct of the Great *Captain of our Salvation;* and, like him let us learn to *resist Satan*, that he may *flee from us.* Like *Christ*, let us maintain such an humble

dependance on the Divine blessing as never to venture out of the way of it, be the *necessity* ever so urgent: nor let us ever expose ourselves to unnecessary *danger*, in expectation of extraordinary deliverance. Like him let us learn to *overcome the world*, and to despise all its pomps and vanities when offered at the price of our innocence.

To furnish us for such a combat, let us take *the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.* Let us not only make ourselves familiarly acquainted with the *words* of *scripture*, but let us study to enter into the true design and *meaning* of it; that so, if *Satan* should attempt to draw his artillery from thence, we may be able to guard against that most dangerous stratagem, and to answer perverted passages of *holy writ* by others more justly applied.

Once more; when the suggestions of *Satan* grow most horrible, let us not conclude that we are utterly abandoned by God, because we are proved by such a trial; since *Christ* himself was *tempted* even to *worship* the infernal tyrant. But in such cases let us resolutely repel the solicitation, rather than parley with it, and say in imitation of *our Lord's* example, and with a dependance on his grace, *Get thee behind me, Satan.*

If our conflict be thus maintained, the struggle will ere long be over; and *angels*, who are now the spectators of the combat, will at length congratulate our victory.

SECTION VI.

John i. 19—28.

And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us: What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou

be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not: He it is, who coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

How remarkably were the words of our blessed Redeemer fulfilled in *John, he that humbleth himself shall be exalted!* (Luke xviii. 14.) He declined assuming the name of any of the servants of God among the *prophets;* and yet our Lord bore testimony to him as of a higher rank than any of the *prophets*, than whom there was *none greater among those* that had in a natural way been *born of women.* (Luke vii. 28.)

Did *John*, this great and illustrious saint, speak of himself as *unworthy to untie* even the *sandals* of *Christ;* what reverence then do we owe him; and what reason have we to admire his condescension, that he should honour us, who are so much more *unworthy*, with the title of *his servants?*

Let not any, the most distinguished of that happy number wonder if they be *unknown* by the world, and perhaps too, slighted and despised; since it appears that even *Jesus* himself, not only at his first appearance *stood unknown* among the *Jews* but afterwards was *rejected* by them, when his claim was solemnly entered and his miracles most publicly wrought.

Vain, and worse than vain, was this message and inquiry which when answered, was so soon overlooked and forgot. May Divine grace teach us to inquire as those that are earnest in our search! and *then shall we know* to saving purposes, *if we* thus *follow on to know the Lord.* (Hos. vi. 3.)

SECTION VII.

John i. 29—42.

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel,

therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the son of God.

Again the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples: And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, thou art Simon the son of Jona: Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone.

Let our faith daily behold *Jesus* under the character of *the Lamb of God*, a Lamb indeed *without blemish and without spot;* by whose *precious blood* we are *redeemed*, as by an infinitely more valuable ransom than *silver and gold.* (1 Pet. i. 18, 19.) As such let us humbly apply to him to *take away our sins*, and rejoice that (as the apostle *John* elsewhere expresses it) *he is the propitiation not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world;* all ages and nations being interested in the benefit of his atonement. (1 John ii. 2.)

Let us consider him as *anointed* by the *Holy Spirit*, and as *baptizing* his church with it; and learn, after the example of *John the Baptist*, to bear our *testimony* to him again and again, with continued steadiness and growing zeal.

Our satisfaction in him, as the great and only Saviour, will surely

grow in proportion to our acquaintance with him. If Divine grace hath discovered him to us, and taught us to repose the confidence of our souls upon him, let us, like *Andrew* in the passage before us, be concerned to make him known to others; and especially to lead our nearest relatives and our most intimate friends into that acquaintance with him which is so absolutely necessary to their eternal happiness!

Let the condescending readiness with which our blessed Redeemer accepted and even invited the visit of these *two disciples*, engage every preacher of righteousness most willingly to give his private as well as his public labours and his time (valuable as that treasure is) to the service of those who are seriously affected with the concerns of their souls, and are inquiring the way to salvation. We are sufficiently honoured, if by any means, and by all, we may be instrumental in promoting that cause which employed the daily labours of God's incarnate Son, and at length cost him his very blood!

SECTION VIII.

John i. 43—51.

The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the king of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say

unto you, Hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

How cautiously should we guard against popular prejudices, which possessed so honest a heart as that of *Nathanael*, and led him to suspect that the blessed *Jesus* himself was an imposter, and that *no good* could be expected from him because he had been brought up at *Nazareth!* But his integrity prevailed over that foolish bias, and laid him open to the conviction of evidence, which a candid inquirer will always be glad to admit, even when it brings the most unexpected discovery.

How amiable is the character here given of *Nathanael! An Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!* May the attainment of so excellent a character, and a resemblance to him in it, be the daily aim and emulation of all who have the honour to be called into the *Israel of God!*

A constant intercourse with God in secret devotion will be a happy expression of one branch of this sincerity, and an effectual means of promoting the rest. Let it therefore be our care that the eye of him that *seeth in secret* may often behold us in religious retirement, pouring out our souls before God, and humbly consecrating them to his service. The day will come when those scenes of duty which were most cautiously concealed shall be commemorated with public honour; and when he who now discerns them, and is a constant witness to the most *private* exercises of the *closet, will reward them openly.* (Matt. vi. 6.)

Happy were those who *saw the miracles* performed by the *Son of Man* while he was here on earth! and happy those favourite spirits of heaven which were *ascending and descending as ministers of his to do his pleasure!* But in some degree yet happier are they *who, having not seen, have believed;* John xx. 29. As their *faith* is peculiarly acceptable, it shall ere long be turned into *sight.* They shall behold much *greater things* than ever were seen below, and more extraordinary manifestations of his glory than they can now conceive; and being brought with all his people to surround his throne, shall join in those nobler services which attendant *angels* render him above.

SECTION IX.

John ii. 1—11.

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And both Jesus was called and his disciples to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do *it*. And there were set there six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare *it*. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: *but* thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

We have here *the first* of *Christ's public miracles*, which we find was not wrought till about his *thirtieth year*. How much sooner could he have glorified himself, and amazed the world by the display of his Divine power! But he waited his Father's call, and the delay added at length to the lustre of his works.

It was performed to grace *a nuptial solemnity:* and who doth not see that it was, in effect, a testimony borne to the honour and purity of that happy state on which so much of the comfort of the present generation and the existence of the future regularly depend?

How happy were these *guests* while *Jesus* was among them! and how condescending did he appear in making one on the

occasion! His social and obliging temper should sweeten ours, and be a lesson to his followers that they avoid every thing sour and morose, and do not censure others for innocent liberties at proper seasons of festivity and joy.

If *his mother* met with so just a rebuke for attempting to *direct* his administrations in the days of his flesh, how absurd is it for any to address her as if she had a right to *command him* on the throne of his glory! And how indecent for us to direct his supreme wisdom as to the time and manner in which he shall appear for us in any of the exigencies of life!

Her submission and faith manifested on this occasion are truly amiable: and with this we have surely reasons to admire the benignity and generosity of *Christ* in this *miracle* before us; who consulted the pleasure and entertainment as well as the necessity of his followers; and by this abundant supply amply repaid any extraordinary expense which he might have occasioned to the family.

How easily could he, who thus *turned water into wine*, have transformed every entertainment of a common table into the greatest delicacies, and have regaled himself daily with royal dainties! But, far superior to such animal gratifications, he chose the severities of a much plainer life. Blessed *Jesus!* who can say whether thou art greater in what thou didst or in what thou didst not do? May none of us thy followers be too intent on indulging our taste or any of our other senses; but, pursuing those intellectual and devotional pleasures which were *thy meat* and *thy drink* on earth, may we wait for that *good wine* which thou reservest for thy people *to the last*, and for those richer dainties with which thou wilt feast those who shall *drink it with thee in thy Father's kingdom!* (Matt. xxvi. 29.)

SECTION X.

John ii. 12—25.

After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples, and they continued there not many days. And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem: And found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said

unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence, make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered, and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them: and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said. Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast *day*, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

How powerful is the love of this world, when it could engage even the *priests* and the *Pharisees* to let out *the temple* itself for a *market place!* though a professed *zeal* for the honour of it made so great a part of the *righteousness* of which they boasted before God. But *our Lord* beheld the scene with *just indignation;* as that displeasure is indeed *just*, which arises from a sense of dishonour done to God and contempt poured on the institutions of his worship. Happy shall we be in the warmest emotions of *zeal* which do not transport us beyond the rules of prudence and love, and make us forget those stations in life which require the same principles to shew themselves in widely different effects!

Methinks the state of the *temple*, when these *traders* had erected *their seats* and their *stalls* in it, and turned the courts of *God's house* into a *market*, is too just an emblem of the state of our *hearts* when we appear in the sanctuary distracted with *worldly cares* to the neglect of that *one thing needful*, which then demands our most attentive regards. Would to God that in this sense *our Father's house* were not often made *a house of merchandise!* Let us pray that *Jesus*, by his good Spirit, would assert it to himself, and *drive out* those intruders which break in upon our truest enjoyments, in proportion to that degree in which they intrench on our devotion!

After a thousand proofs of his Divine mission, the *Jews* were wicked and desperate enough, with sacrilegious hands to *destroy the temple of Christ's body:* but let us be thankful for the undoubted evidence we have, that, as an everlasting monument of his power and truth, he *raised it again in three days!*

Happy will it be for us if we cordially *believe* a gospel so gloriously attested: but most vain will that belief be which doth not penetrate and influence the heart. Let us remember that we have to do with him, that formed our nature and is most intimately acquainted with all its recesses. *He knows what is in man;* may he see nothing in us which shall not be thoroughly agreeable to the profession we make of being his faithful disciples!

To conclude; let us learn, from the *caution* which *Jesus* used, not rashly to put ourselves and our usefulness into the power of others; but to study a wise and happy medium between that universal prejudice and *suspicion*, which, while it wrongs the best and the most worthy characters, would deprive us of all the pleasures of an intimate friendship, and that undistinguishing *easiness* and openness of temper which might make us the property of every hypocritical pretender to kindness and respect.

SECTION XI.

John iii. 1—26.

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh,

and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear with attention what the blessed Redeemer said on this occasion. It is surely a matter of universal concern: for who would not desire to *enter into the kingdom of God?* to be an acceptable member of *Christ's* church now, and an heir of glory beyond the grave?—But how is this blessing to be expected and secured? Thus saith the Lord himself, *Unless a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Let us remember therefore that it is not enough that a new name be given us, or that a new profession be assumed; it is not enough that we are descended from the most pious ancestors, that we have been externally devoted to God by the early seal of his covenant, or that we openly have made a solemn and express profession of our own faith and obedience, and have been *born of* baptismal *water* in our riper years! There must be a *new nature* implanted, a *new creation* formed in our souls by the almighty energy of the eternal *Spirit*, or it had been better for us that we had *never been born* at all.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and as we all proceed from a corrupt original, we do not more evidently *bear the image of the earthly Adam* in the infirmities of a mortal body than in the degeneracy of a corrupt mind. Oh, let us earnestly intreat that being born of the sanctifying influences *of the Spirit*, we may *bear the image of the heavenly!* And to these influences let us with all humility and thankfulness be ready to yield up our souls, as remembering that they are of a free and sovereign nature, like *the wind* that *bloweth where it will*, and *does not stay for* the command of *the children of men.*

Let none of us indulge a vain and useless curiosity with respect to the *manner* of the *Spirit's operations*, or *wonder* that we meet with some things that are secret and unknown in matters of a spiritual nature, when we see daily there are so many things unknown in the common appearances of the natural world, and indeed so few that we can perfectly understand.

May the pride of a falsely pretended *reason* be subdued to the authority of *faith.* And more especially, may such as are *teachers in Israel*, or who are designed for that important office, take their instructions with all humility from this *teacher* sent *from God!* For it must surely be not only *their calamity*, but that too of the *church* in general, if its guides continue ignorant of those sublime and spiritual truths which *Christ* came down from heaven to reveal, or are so biassed by the carnal reasonings of a depraved mind as to be indisposed and backward to receive them.

SECTION XII.

John iii. 12—21.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen: and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world: but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

How happy is it for us that, since *none* of the *children of men* ever *ascended up into heaven* to learn the mysteries of Divine knowledge there, *the only begotten Son of God* has been pleased to *come down from thence* that he might instruct us! He *spake what he knew, and testified what he had seen;* Oh that men were so wise as to *receive his testimony,* be the discoveries ever so new cr the doctrines ever so sublime!

Let us with peculiar pleasure attend unto that *abstract of the gospel* which he exhibited in this profitable and comprehensive discourse with *Nicodemus.*—It presents to our view Christ, and *him crucified.* It opens the treasures of Divine beneficence and compassion, and shews us the Father of mercies *so loving a world,* which he might justly have abhorred and destroyed, as to *give his only begotten Son* to be a ransom for it.

Let us behold him *lifted up* on the cross as the great attractive to whom all were to be *drawn!* In him shall we find the *Divine cure* for our souls, infected as they are with the poison of sin, if we behold him not merely with a curious but a *believing* eye. Whatever our wounds be, if in the exercise of *faith* we look to him, we shall not die of them; but it is owing to our own obstinacy and impenitence if we yet *perish.*

He might justly have appeared in a different form for the *condemnation* of sinners, rather than their *salvation.* The *Son of God* might have *come into* an apostate *world* armed with thunderbolts of flaming vengeance to punish the violation of his Father's law; but his hands are filled with eternal blessings.

As we love our own souls, let us apply to him in time for this *salvation.* Let us dread the aggravated *condemnation* of those who, *when light is come into the world,* prefer *darkness* to it, and obstinately shut their eyes against it, though it be the dawnings of an eternal day.

May integrity and uprightness preserve us! (Psalm xxv. 21.) And, conscious of a real desire to govern ourselves according to the *light* we have, may we cheerfully lay ourselves in the way of more; that in the last awful day, when the sentence of Divine wrath shall be executed on all the servants of sin, and their character shall stand disclosed in the most odious colours, ours may shine out beautiful and fair, and the good *deeds* that we have done, being now *wrought in God,* may then not only be accepted and applauded, but through the grace of the Redeemer abundantly rewarded by him!

SECTION XIII.

John iii. 22—36.

After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea, and there he tarried with them and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came and were baptized. For John

was not yet cast into prison. Then there arose a question between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews, about purifying. And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all *men* come to him. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I *must* decrease. He that cometh from above, is above all: he that is of the earth, is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all: And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth, and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him.

It is indeed too true that *the spirit which* naturally *dwelleth in us* all *lusteth to envy*, (James iv. 5,) and it is far from being a low attainment in religion to look with complacency and thankfulness on the superior abilities and acceptance of others, especially of those who once appeared in an inferior rank. But for the cure of this unreasonable and restless passion, so contrary to the true spirit of the gospel, let us remember that *a man can receive nothing* at all *except it be given him from heaven*. It is God that makes one man to *differ* from another; and surely nothing can be more unreasonable than that, when we ourselves have received all from his bounty, *our eye should be evil because he is good*. (Matt. xx. 15.)

If we are indeed the *friends of Christ*, we shall *rejoice* to see his interest advance, and especially to see souls espoused to him as the great *Bridegroom* of the church, whoever are the instruments of promoting so happy a work. *Would to God that* in this

sense *all the Lord's people were* even as the greatest of the *prophets*, or as the very chief of the *apostles!* (Numb. xi. 29.)

But if indeed they were so, yet, like those brightest luminaries of the church, they must in time have their *change* and their *wane*. If God does not darken their glories by a sudden *eclipse*, yet they who are now, like *the Baptist, burning and shining lights, must* like him gradually *decrease*, while others are *increasing* about them; as they, in their turns, grew up amidst the decays of the former generation. Let us know how to *set* as well as to *rise;* and let it comfort our declining days to trace in those that are likely to succeed us in our work the openings of yet greater usefulness. So shall we grow in our meetness for that world where all *the righteous shall shine forth* together, *as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father*, in a bright resemblance of him *with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.*

As the surest means of guiding us to that happy world, let us make it our great care, *by receiving the testimony of Christ*, to *set* our *seal to the truth of God*, engaged in his cause.—With how much pleasure should we do it, and with what joy should we reflect that *the Father* so *loveth the Son* that he has not only *given him* the rich and unmeasurable communications of the *Spirit*, but *has committed* also *into his hand* the reins of *government!* Let his faithful servants remember it with joy, and cheerfully commit their concerns to him *who is made head over all things for* the benefit of *his church.* (Ephes. i. 22.)

And to conclude; let it engage us to see the sincerity of our *faith* in him and *subjection* to him; since it is not a light matter, but *our life*, even the very *life of our souls.* May God awaken those on whom his *wrath* now *abideth* to a sense of their danger; and may he strengthen in each of our souls that *faith* which is the pledge of a happy immortality!

SECTION XIV.

John iv. 1—26.

When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) he left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called

Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore being wearied with *his* journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what:

we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God *is* a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship *him* in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee, am *he*.

Condescending and compassionate *Redeemer!* who would thus graciously converse with a *Samaritan*, with a woman of an infamous reputation too, from whom, on various accounts, a haughty *Pharisee* would have turned away in proud disdain! and could forget his *thirst*, pressing as that appetite is, that he might instruct and lead her to the *waters of life!*

Gracious *gift of God* to the children of men! how noble and how lasting a delight does it administer! Let it be our language, *Lord, evermore give us this living water!* Oh, pour out this enlivening *spirit* on us, which alone can allay the *thirst* of our souls, and give us that lasting satisfaction which we in vain would seek from these *broken cisterns*, from these precarious streams; till at length the *fountain springs up* in Paradise, and flows on to *life everlasting!*

May this good *spirit* anticipate those immortal delights to our souls by leading us into that *spirituality of worship* which the nature of God demands, and which the gospel dispensation is so eminently calculated to promote! Let it be inscribed on our hearts that *God is a Spirit;* and let it teach us *to worship him in spirit and in truth. Such worshippers the Father seeks;* such may he ever find in us!

May all intemperate zeal for matters of doubtful disputation, all sentiments of bigotry and severity against our brethren, be happily swallowed up in this infinitely greater concern! and while others contend about *places* and *forms* of worship, may we pour out *our hearts* before him, and feel the *love of God and man shed abroad in them by his Spirit given unto us!* (Rom. v. 5.)

SECTION XV.

John iv. 27—42.

And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman; yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city and came unto him. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him *ought* to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word: and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard *him* ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Let us behold with pleasure the glorious example of our blessed *Redeemer*, and learn to imitate his zeal. It was *his meat and drink* to pursue *his Father's work*, to glorify God, and to do good to souls: and ought it not to be *ours?* Let us bless God for every opportunity of applying to it and every field of service, which Providence opens to us.

Let *gospel ministers* especially be thankful for all that hath been done to introduce their services, not only by the ministration of the *prophets* under the *Old Testament*, but the *apostles* also under the *New*, and by succeeding *servants of Christ* in every age of the church. In this sense, with regard to us, is that *proverb* true, *One soweth and another reapeth.* We have *entered into the labours of others:* may others in time enter into ours! May the work be delivered over from one faithful hand to another and be carried on by each with growing zeal and success! Blessed time, when all the *workmen* shall meet and join their songs; and each of the souls *gathered into eternal life* shall be, to all concerned in their conversion or edification, an ornament of glory and a source of pleasure!

Surely, if we *know Christ* ourselves, we shall, like this *woman of Samaria*, be solicitous to communicate the knowledge to others, and shall sometimes forget our little *worldly interests* to attend to this vast superior care. May we *believe in him*, not merely on the report and *testimony of others*, but on our own *experience;* that having *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, we may bear a more lively and effectual testimony to him!

Let us watchfully observe the leadings of Providence, and whatever our own schemes may have been, let us still adjust our conduct by the intimations of present duty; and especially where we have reason to believe that God is by his *Spirit* beginning to work on men's hearts, let us be ambitious of being *workers together with him. A word spoken in* such a *season is* remarkably *good*, and it is a great part of Christian and ministerial prudence to observe and improve those tender times.

SECTION XVI.

John iv. 43—54.

Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee. For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.—Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto

the feast. So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told *him*, saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour, when he began to amend: And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it *was* at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house. This *is* again the second miracle *that* Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

How unreasonable are the passions and prejudices of mankind, and this in particular, *a prophet* should have *no honour in his own country!* One would have imagined that *Jesus* at least, free as he was from all the follies of childhood and youth, should have been an exception; nay, indeed, that he should have been peculiarly honoured there, where his early wisdom and piety could not but be observed.

Our Lord however intended them a visit, even at *Nazareth;* and it is the duty of his *ministers* to bear their testimony, *whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear.* Yet should they learn of their Great Master to study as much as they can to obviate those prejudices, which might prevent their usefulness, and should use the most prudent and gentle methods to vanquish them.

Such was this beneficial *miracle of our Lord;* which may afford us many particulars worthy of our notice. With what affection and zeal does this tender *parent* apply to *Christ* on the sickness of *his child!* Let us not be less importunate when soliciting spiritual blessings in behalf of our dear offspring: and so much the rather as *their lives* are so precarious, and we know not how soon these lovely *flowers* may be cut down, and all farther petitions for them be for ever superseded.

Our Lord while *at a distance* from the patient, wrought and perfected the cure. And has he not still the same Divine power, though he does not exert it in the same miraculous way? Let not his *bodily absence* abate our faith, while praying for others or for ourselves.

Salvation now *came to this house*, and blessings infinitely more valuable than noble blood, or ample possessions, or royal favour, or recovered health could give; for *the cure* wrought on the *body of one* was a means of producing *faith* in the *hearts of all.* Blessed *Jesus!* thy power was no less employed in the latter than in the former. Oh may that power work in such a manner on our souls as that we all may be disposed cordially to receive thee, and cheerfully to venture our *eternal all* upon thee! May *we and our houses* concur in so wise and happy a resolution; and not insisting upon *evidence* beyond what thy gracious wisdom has thought fit to give us, may we candidly receive the light we have, and faithfully improve it so as to be at length entitled to the *blessedness* of those *who have not seen and yet have believed!* John xx. 29.

SECTION XVII.

Luke iv. 14—30.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias, and when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave *it* again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out

of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself; whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily, I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, *a city* of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them, went his way.

We see that it was the *custom* of our blessed *Saviour* to frequent the *synagogues* every *sabbath day;* how well therefore does it become his servants to be constant in their attendance on public ordinances, especially since those of the *gospel* are in many respects so much nobler than any which the *Mosaic* institution would admit!

In the *synagogues* the *scriptures* were constantly *read;* and it is matter of pleasing reflection that, in all ages of the *Christian church*, the *reading them* hath usually been made a part of the service in most of its solemn assemblies. Let it still be so with us for this reason, among others, that so glorious a testimony to the genuineness of *scripture* may not be impaired in our hands, but transmitted to those that shall arise after us.

And surely the *Old Testament*, as well as the *New*, deserves our attentive perusal; in which, if we are not strangely negligent, or strangely prejudiced, we must often meet with remarkable *prophecies of Christ* shining with a pleasing lustre, like *lights in a dark place.* (2 Pet. i. 19.) How amiable a view of him is given in that which he now opened! Let us seriously attend to it. It is a moving representation that is here made of the deplorable *state* in which the *gospel* finds us! The helpless *prisoners* of Divine justice, the wretched *captives of Satan*, stripped and *wounded*, the eyes of our understanding *blinded*, and the powers

of our souls *enfeebled;* and, as it were, *bruised* with those chains which prejudice and vice have fastened upon them! But in these miserable circumstances *Jesus* appears to *open the doors of our prison*, to *strike off our fetters*, and even *to restore our sight.* He comes to *enrich* our impoverished souls, and to *preach* a far better *jubilee* than *Moses* could proclaim; the free forgiveness of all our sins and the recovery of an inheritance of eternal glory. Surely it should be to us a most *acceptable time. Blessed are the people that know this joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance!* Psalm lxxxix. 15.

In some sense *this* instructive and comfortable *scripture is this day fulfilled in our ears* likewise. Let us also *bear our testimony* to the *gracious words* of this welcome messenger whom God *hath annointed* for such happy purposes!

One would have imagined that while the *eyes* of his auditors were *fixed upon him*, their *souls* should have drank in his doctrine as *the thirsty earth* sucks up *the rain*, and that every heart should have been open to embrace him. But, O blessed *Jesus*, while thou art preaching these *glad tidings of great joy*, what a return dost thou find! Thou art ungratefully rejected, thou art impiously assaulted; and had their rage and malice been able to prevail, *the joyful sound* would have died into empty air as soon as it began, and this thy *first sermon* at *Nazareth*, had been thy *last.*

Thus disdainfully art thou still *rejected* by multitudes who still hear the same message echoing from thy word. And is there not a malignity in the hearts of sinners which might lead those of our own days to the outrageous wickedness of these *Nazarenes*, were their opportunities the same, rather than they would bow their stubborn hearts to the *obedience of faith?* But while they are *crucifying thee afresh* by their sins, and *putting thee to open shame*, may we honour thee as the *Son of God*, the *Saviour of men;* and labour by the ardour of our love and the steadiness of our obedience, in some measure to balance the ingratitude of those, who, while they are opposing thee, are destroying themselves!

SECTION XVIII.

MATTHEW IV. 12—26. MARK I. 14—20. LUKE IV. 31, 32.

Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he came into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came down to, and dwelt in Capernaum, a city of Galilee, which is upon the sea-coast in the borders of Zabulon and Nepthalim: That it might be fulfiled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nepthalim *by* the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people which sat in darkness, saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up.—From that time Jesus began to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God, and to say, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: Repent ye, and believe the gospel.

And Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets and followed him. And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets: And straightway he called them; and they immediately left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

Such was the zeal and courage of our blessed *Redeemer*, that he no sooner had been persecuted and assaulted at *Nazareth*, but he went and preached in the synagogue at *Capernaum*. Thus may all the opposition that we meet with in the course of our duty animate, rather than overbear, our resolution in performing it!

How happy was *the land of Zabulon and Nepthalim* in the visits

of such a guest! And may we not add too, how happy is *our own land* in being visited by the *everlasting gospel*, which is now much more clearly discovered to us than it was to *these coasts* while *Christ* began to open his ministry among their inhabitants.

In us is this *prophecy* of *Isaiah* eminently *fulfilled:* We but a few ages ago *sat in darkness;* and behold we *see a great light.* Our country, amidst all the advantages of its soil and situation, was in a spiritual sense, *the region and the shadow of death;* but the *Sun of Righteousness is risen upon us*, nor do we only behold his rising beams, but his meridian lustre. May we not be so ungrateful as obstinately to shut our eyes against it, lest *the valley of vision*, and *Emmanuel's land*, should on the whole prove to us the *land of destruction* and *the valley of death* itself!

That this may never be our case, let us diligently attend to this *Divine Teacher*, who speaks with such *authority*, and whose *words* are so weighty and *powerful.* May we feel the energy and authority of them! May they call us off from every undue attachment to the business or the pleasures of life! And if ever he should see fit to try us, as he did these his servants, with a a command to *forsake* our nearest *relations* and our *earthly all*, for his service, let us do it with pleasure; remembering on the one hand, that *he who loves father or mother, wife or children, houses or lands, more than Christ, is not worthy of him;* and on the other hand, that he who abandons these engagements, *for his sake, shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, and in the world to come, life everlasting.* (Matt. x. 37, and Mark x. 29, 30.)

SECTION XIX.

Mark i. 21—28. Luke iv. 31—37.

And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught them. And they were astonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power, for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone, what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out

of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and thrown him in the midst, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine *is* this? for with authority and power he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him, and come out. And immediately his fame spread abroad, throughout all the region into every place of the country round about Galilee.

Justly may we join our *astonishment* with that of the inhabitants of *Capernaum*, and say, What manner of teaching is this? and with what regard should it be received, when the *devils* themselves, and the most desperate *diseases*, are thus apparently subject to him who uses it?

We see the malice of *Satan* in *possessing* and tormenting the *bodies* of men. God then permitted it, to render *Christ's* triumph over him so much the more illustrious, and the appearance of that great *Deliverer* so much the more welcome. Such diabolical operations as these are now restrained; and it is matter of great thankfulness that they are. But would to God that malignant enemy did not, in a yet more fatal manner, *possess the souls* of men *and work in the children of disobedience!* Yet *there* can the power of *Jesus* prevail, to *bind the strong man and spoil his goods.*

Wisely did *Christ silence* the suspicious *praises* of *an unclean spirit*, and vain is all the hope which men build merely on those *orthodox professions* of the most important truths, in which *Satan* himself could vie with them.

SECTION XX.

Matt. viii. 14—17.—Mark i. 29—34.—Luke iv. 38—41.

And forthwith when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon Peter and Andrew, with James and John. And Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a great fever: and anon they told him of her, and besought him for her, And he came, and stood over her and took her by the hand, and rebuked the fever, and lifted her up, and

immediately the fever left her. And she arose, and ministered unto them.

And at even, when the sun did set, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him, and they brought unto him many that were possessed of devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he cast out many devils with *his* word, and they cried out, saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered not the devils to speak: for they knew him, that he was Christ. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases: and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses.

Mark i. 35—39.—Luke iv. 42—44.

And in the morning rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a desert place, and there prayed. And Simon, and they that were with him, followed after him: And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And the people sought him, and came unto him and stayed him that he should not depart from them. And he said unto them, let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also. I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

Matt. iv. 23—25.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And his

fame went throughout all Syria: And they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and *from* Decapolis, and *from* Jerusalem, and *from* Judæa, and *from* beyond Jordan.

Christ returning from the *synagogue*, finds the *mother-in-law of Peter* detained from the solemn assemblies, a prisoner at home under an afflictive providence, which that circumstance of *confinement* probably rendered yet more afflictive to her. But the mercy which the evening brought with it was a rich equivalent for all the sorrows of the day. Jesus, their welcome guest, appears as the great *Physician* both of soul and body; a touch of his *hand* assuages the tumult in her veins, and at his *voice* the distemper leaves her. Surely, as the great *Lord* in the kingdom of Providence, he performs those *cures* which are now wrought by natural means, and is to be owned in them. Must not each of us thankfully acknowledge how often he hath *rebuked fevers* and other distempers by the skill of physicians, and the efficacy of medicines; so that they have departed from us perhaps when we esteemed them desperate, and had received *the sentence of death in ourselves?*

Let us learn to imitate the pious *gratitude* of this *good woman*, who, when recovered, *immediately arose and ministered unto Christ.* Thus let it be our care that those lives which are spared by his goodness, and that strength which is renewed by his power, may be faithfully and affectionately devoted to his service.

How delightfully were the *sabbaths of Christ* spent in the midst of all his fatigues! How pleasantly did *the sun go down* upon him, when he had been imitating that heavenly luminary in his steady and constant course; scattering a brighter light and more beneficial influences upon all about him.

And when the *sabbath* had been spent in these labours of piety and love, how happily were the fruits of it carried into the ensuing *week?* The first *morning* of it, that it might be most pleasantly and most profitably begun *Jesus rose before it was light*, that he might enjoy God and himself in religious retirement. It surely becomes us sometimes willingly to deny ourselves the gratification of sleep, that we may have the better opportunity for devotion. And it should be the peculiar care of those who are employed in God's public service, to cultivate communion with him in private; lest while they *keep the vineyard* of others, their own be *neglected* and impoverished. Cant. i. 6.

Our Lord's retirement is interrupted by *the people* who came to *inquire after him* and desired to have *detained him* longer among them: and who that has ever known the pleasure of conversing with him, would not desire that it might be longer continued and frequently renewed? But in this instance, *their request* must be *denied;* the great purpose of his *ministry* required his presence elsewhere, and he breaks through all that importunity which would have broken in upon his schemes of usefulness: a resolution which we must learn in some cases to imitate, if we would prosecute the business of life with vigour and success. Let us often reflect *wherefore we are sent;* and judge by that where God would have us to be; that by the intimations of his pleasure every motion may be regulated, and every abode determined.

Wherever *Christ* removes, he still *goes about doing good*, publishing the gospel and confirming it by the most amazing works of power and mercy. How well were these *miracles* suited to awaken men's attention, and to convince their consciences of his Divine mission! Well might *his fame* go over the *whole country*: may it extend itself now to the remotest regions, that *all the ends of the earth* may *look unto him and be saved*, (Is. xlv. 22,) while he displays a *healing power* over their *spirits* proportionable to that which he here exerted on their *bodies!*

SECTION XX.

Matthew v. 1—16.

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain. And when he was sat, his disciples came unto him. And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,—

Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed *are* they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed *are* the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteous-

ness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed *are* ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world: A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel: but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

What abundant reason have we to bless God that this large and edifying discourse of our blessed Reeeemer is thus particularly recorded by the sacred historian. Let every one *that hath ears to hear* attend to it; for surely *never man spake as our Lord* here *doth.* Let us fix our souls in a posture of humble attention, that we may *receive the law from his mouth.*

He opened it with *blessings*, repeated and most important *blessings.* But on whom are they pronounced? and whom are we taught to think the *happiest* of mankind? The *meek* and the *humble*, the *penitent* and the *merciful*, the *peaceful* and the *pure*, those that *hunger and thirst after righteousnes*, those that labour, but faint not under *persecution!* Blessed *Jesus!* how different are thy maxims from those of the children of this world! They call the proud *happy*, and amire the gay, the rich, the powerful and the victorious. But let a vain world take its gaudy trifles, and dress up the foolish creatures that pursue them. May our souls share in that *happiness* which the Son of God came to recommend and to procure! May we *obtain mercy* of the Lord; may we be owned as *his children;* may we *see his face;* and may we *inherit his kingdom!* With these enjoyments, and these hopes, we will cheerfully welcome the lowest or the most painful circumstances.

Let us awaken and stir up our souls to the cultivation of those amiable *virtues* which are here recommended to our pursuit; this *humility* and *meekness*, this *penitent sense* of sin, this *ardent desire*

after righteousness, this *compassion* and *purity*, this *peacefulness* and *fortitude of soul*, and, in a word, this *universal goodness*, which becomes us, as we sustain the character of *the salt of the earth and the light of the world.*

Is not there reason to lament it, that we answer the character no more? Is there not reason to cry out, with a good man in former times, 'Blessed *Jesus!* either these are not thy words, or we are not *Christians!*' Oh, season our hearts more effectually with thy *grace!* Pour forth that Divine *oil* on our lamps! Then shall the flame brighten; then shall the ancient honours of thy religion be revived; and multitudes be awakened and animated by the lustre of it *to glorify our Father in heaven.* Amen.

SECTION XXI.

Matthew v. 17—26.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: But whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Ye have heard, that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, *Thou* fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore,

if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee: Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly whiles thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Let us seriously consider and often recollect the purposes of *Christ's* appearance: *he came not to destroy the law and the prophets*, or to dissolve men's obligation to observe them: but rather to enforce as well as to fulfil them. How fatally shall we pervert the purposes of his coming, if we regard him as the *minister of sin!* How ungratefully shall we abuse the merciful constitution of his *gospel* should we take encouragement from thence to violate his *law?* Dangerous as well as ungrateful abuse indeed! For God's eye will be watchful over its honours, and his hand exerted to maintain them; so that *heaven and earth shall pass away* before it shall fail of its *accomplishment* in being either obeyed or avenged on the impenitent sinner. May it be our constant care to *keep* it ourselves, and to *teach* others to observe it! May we *teach* it by our lives as well as our lips; and let our daily conversation demonstrate how practicable and how amiable its precepts are! So shall we be *great in the kingdom of heaven*, in the pursuit of which we may give full scope to the noblest ambition of which human nature is capable.

Let our hearts own and feel the *spiritual* sense of *God's law*, that we may rise to a more sincere and more extensive *righteousness* than that of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*. May we *delight in it after the inward man*, and learn to regulate our thoughts and our passions, as well as our external behaviour, by it!

Especially let us avoid all the malignant and ill-natured *passions*, all thoughts of rash and immoderate *anger*, all words of contumely and *reproach*. If we would maintain communion with the *God of love*, let love govern in our hearts; and when we come to present our devotions to him, let us *lift up holy hands without wrath*, as well as *without doubting*, (1 Tim. ii. 8,) so may we promise ourselves a gracious welcome; so shall we carry away the most valuable blessings!

But are none of us strangers to this blessed state? Are none of us obnoxious to the Divine displeasure? If we are so, with what a holy solicitude of soul should we labour, to make up the *contro-*

versy and *come to an agreement, while we are* yet *in the way* with this awful *adversary!* lest we be immediately hurried before the tribunal of the *righteous Judge of all the world*, and *be delivered* into the hands of justice, to be *reserved in everlasting chains* beyond the possibility of redemption.

Lord, we were all the *debtors*, and in one sense, the *prisoners* of thy justice; and of ourselves we are most incapable, not only of *paying the uttermost farthing*, but even of discharging the least part of the debt! We bless thee for that generous *Surety* who has undertaken and discharged it for us: and by the price of whose atoning blood we are *delivered* from the *chains of darkness*, and are *translated into the glorious liberty of thy children.*

SECTION XXII.

Matthew v. 27—48.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Again ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is

God's throne: nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea, Nay, nay: for whatsoever *is* more than these, cometh of evil.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others?* do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Alas! how may we blush to call God *our Father*, while we resemble him so little! And what reason is there, on a survey of these directions of *our Lord*, to acknowledge our deficiencies and our faults! Let us review the many advantages we enjoy, as *Christians*, and the engagements we are under in the particular circumstances in which Divine Providence has placed us; and blush to think that *we do* so little *more than others*, perhaps in many instances falling short even of the virtues of *heathens*.

Let us particularly be instructed by these lessons of our Divine Master to recompense *good for evil:* lessons which come with peculiar grace from his mouth, as he was himself the kindest

friend to his most inveterate enemies, and bore and forgave more than any but himself could possibly do.

Let us who are his *disciples*, abhor *contention* and *revenge*. Let us not prosecute every little *injury* to the utmost, nor govern ourselves by those false maxims of prudence and honour, which pride and self-love have introduced on the ruins of real *Christianity*. Let us not, even in the most legal methods, seek the punishment of those who have *wronged us*, except in circumstances in which we are in our conscience persuaded it will, on the whole, be greater *charity* to animadvert on the offence than to pass it by; and even then let us act in a calm and dispassionate manner, pitying and loving the persons of the *injurious*, even while, for the sake of society, we prosecute their crimes.

If this be our duty towards our *enemies*, how inexcusable are we if we are cold and insensible to our *friends*. And how much worse than *publicans* themselves, if we do not *love them that love us*, and *do good* to those from whom we have *received* it. Happy is that *Christian* to whom the God of nature hath given a heart so turned to sentiments of benevolence that, in all these instances, *love* is *a law unto itself*.

Yet let us remember, that the whole of our duty is not comprehended in these *social regards*. The great Author of our being, who hath endowed us with rational faculties, justly requires that we assert their empire over the meaner powers of appetite and passion. We see that he forbids not only gross enormities, as *adultery*, (which, though so unaccountably spared by the laws of many *Christian* countries, the *heathens* themselves have condemned as a capital crime, and which some of the most barbarous nations have esteemed infamous,) but the *unchastity* of *the eye* and of *the heart*. Let us then earnestly pray that God would *create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us;* (Psalm li. 10;) and let us maintain a most resolute guard over our senses and our thoughts, remembering that there is no other alternative, but that the *dearest* of our *lusts* must be *mortified* and subdued, or our *whole persons be cast into hell*.

Elevate our affections, O Lord, to nobler objects than those which are suited merely to animal nature! Teach us to *keep under the body, and bring it under subjection*, (1 Cor. ix. 27,) that we may not finally *be cast away* from thy presence, and fall into that dreadful state where every drop of sinful pleasure will be recompensed with full vials of misery and despair!

SECTION XXIV.

Matt. vi. 1—18.

Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are;* for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do:* for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye:—

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive

not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Moreover, when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Let us learn from these repeated admonitions of our blessed *Redeemer* what is the only acceptable *principle* of every religious action; namely, a desire to approve ourselves to *God* in it: and let us particularly bring it into the instances in which it is here recommended.

Our Lord takes it for granted that his disciples would be both *charitable* and *devout*. Let us cultivate both these branches of the *Christian* temper and avoid *ostentation* in both; as remembering the day approaches when every one of us must be *made manifest* in his true character before the tribunal of *Christ*. And, oh, what discoveries will then be opened upon the world! How many specious masks will be plucked off, that the *hypocrite's* character may appear in its native deformity! And, on the other hand, how many *secret acts* of piety and benevolence, which have been industriously concealed from human observation, will then shine forth in all their glory, celebrated and rewarded by *God himself, who sees in secret*, and whose eye penetrates all the recesses of our houses and our hearts!

There may our praise and our portion be! In the mean time let us with humble pleasure obey the call of our Divine Master, and be often addressing our *heavenly Father* in such language as he hath taught us; *entering*, for secret exercise of devotion *into our closet and shutting our door*, excluding (as far as possible) every thought which would interrupt us in these sacred and happy moments. From thence let our *prayers* daily come up before the throne *like incense*, and *the lifting up of our hands be as* the morning and *the evening sacrifice*. (Psalm cxli. 2.)

Christ himself has condescended to teach us to *pray*. Attentive to his precepts, animated by his example and emboldened by his intercession, let us learn and practise the lesson. Shed abroad on our hearts, O Lord, thy *Spirit of adoption*, which may *teach us to cry Abba Father!* to draw nigh to thee with filial reverence and confidence and with fraternal charity for each other, even for the *whole family*, to whom thou graciously ownest the relation! Inspire us with that zeal for thy glory which may render the honour of *thy name*, the prosperity of *thy kingdom*, and the accom-

plishment of *thy will* far dearer to us than any interest of our own! On thee may we maintain a cheerful dependance for our *daily bread*, and *having food and raiment, be therewith content*, (1 Tim. vi. 8.) most solicitously seeking the *pardon* of our *past sins* and the influences of thy grace to preserve us from *future temptations*, or to secure us in them! And may our sense of that need in which we stand of *forgiveness from thee*, dispose us cordially to *forgive each other*, especially as thou hast wisely and and graciously made this the necessary means of receiving our own pardon! Our corrupted hearts are too little disposed for these sentiments; but may God's Almighty power produce and cherish them in us! and while the *comfort* is ours may *all the glory* be his, *through Jesus Christ our Lord!* Amen.

SECTION XXV.

Matt. vi. 19—34.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth

them. Are not ye much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

How kind are these *precepts of our* blessed *Redeemer;* the substance of which is indeed but this, *Do thyself no harm.* Let us not be so ungrateful to him and so injurious to ourselves, as to harass and oppress our minds with that burden of *anxiety* which he has so graciously taken off. Every verse and clause we have been reading speaks at once to the understanding and the heart. We will not therefore indulge these unnecessary, these useless, these mischievous *cares;* we will not borrow the *anxieties* and distresses of *the morrow* to aggravate those of the *present day:* but rather will we cheerfully repose ourselves on that *heavenly Father* who *knows that we need these things,* and has given us *life,* which is *more than meat; and the body,* which is *more than raiment;* and thus instructed in the philosophy of our heavenly Master will learn a lesson of faith and cheerfulness from every *bird of the air,* and every *flower of the field.*

Let the *Gentiles* that know not God perplex their minds with unworthy suspicions, or bow them down to the ignoble servitude of *Mammon,* that base rival of our living *Jehovah;* but we, far from desiring to share our hearts and our services between *two* such contrary *masters,* will cheerfully devote them to him, whose right to them is so infinitely beyond all room for any contest. Let us *take heed and beware of covetousness,* and make it our

business not to *hoard up earthly* and corruptible *treasures*, but *first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness;* so shall *other things be added* for present subsistence; and so shall we *lay up in store* an incorruptible *treasure in heaven*, in which we shall be rich and happy, when the *riches of this world* are consumed with their owners, and the whole *fashion of it is passed away.*

While these divine maxims are spreading their *light* about us, let our *eye be clear* to behold them, and our heart open to receive them: and let us cautiously guard against those deceitful principles of action which would give a wrong bias to all our pursuits, and turn *the light which is in us* into a fatal and incurable *darkness.*

SECTION XXVI.

Matthew vii. 1—20.

Judge not, that ye be not judged: for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and behold a beam *is* in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again, and rend you.

Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much

more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? Therfore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Enter ye in at the strait gate for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit: neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

When will the happy time come in which *Christians* shall form themselves on these important *maxims* of their great *Master?* When shall they be known to be *his disciples* by the *candour* of their sentiments, the *equity* of their conduct, and the *beneficence* of their actions, as well as by the *articles* of their *faith* and the *forms* of their *worship.* Let us all apply these charges to ourselves in the dear and awful name of him that gave them.

What can be more dreadful to us than to think of being severely *judged* by that God, without whose hourly forbearance and gracious indulgence we are all undone? Let us then exercise that *mercy* which we need: and to form our minds to this most reasonable temper, let us often be thinking of *our own* many *infirmities*, and be humbling ourselves before God on account of them.

Animated by the gracious invitations and the precious promises which are here given, with earnest importunity let us make our daily *addresses* to his throne; *asking*, that we may *receive; seeking*, that we may *find; knocking*, that the door of mercy may be *opened* to us. And while any of us feel in our hearts the workings of *parental tenderness* towards our infant offspring, let us consider it as a delightful emblem of yet greater *readiness* in our *heavenly Father* to pity and relieve his *children.*

May universal righteousness and charity be practised by us in the whole of our behaviour, and may we *always exercise ourselves herein to have a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards men.* (Acts xxiv. 16.) May we avoid all manner of injustice, and guard against the sallies of a proud and over-bearing temper! May we be upright and benevolent in all our conduct; and make it our constant care to govern our actions by that most equitable *rule*, Of *doing to others as we* would reasonably *desire they should do to us*, on a change of our circumstances and theirs! Happy those generous souls in whom the bias of *self-love* is so rectified, that they can, in this instance, hold the *balance* between themselves and others with an impartial and unwavering hand!

On the whole, let us remember that we ourselves are at last to be tried by the rule by which we are here directed to judge of others, even by *the fruits* which we produce. May God by his grace make the *tree good*, that the productions of it may be found to his glory and the refreshment of all around us, that we may not be *cut down as cucumbers of the ground, and cast into the fire.*

The *way of life*, which our blessed *Redeemer* has marked out for us in such precepts as these, may indeed to corrupt nature appear *rugged* and narrow, and *the gate strait* through which we are to pass: but let us encourage ourselves against all the difficulties, by considering that immortal *life* and glory to which they infallibly *lead.* Then shall we, doubtless, prefer the most *painful way* of piety and virtue, though with yet *fewer companions* than we might reasonably expect, to all those *flowery* and *frequented paths* of vice which *go down to the chambers of death.*

SECTION XXVII.

Matthew vii. 21—29.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine,

and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine. For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the Scribes.

How justly may *our admiration* concur with *theirs* that heard *these sayings of our Lord*, while we have the honour and pleasure of attending these discourses as the inspired penmen have recorded them, by the assistance of that *Spirit* who was to *bring all things to their remembrance.* Are we not struck with the *authority* of this *Divine Teacher*, so as to *bear our witnsss* to the *gracious* and edifying *words that proceedeth out of his mouth?* (Luke iv. 22.)

Let us not content ourselves with applauding what we have heard, but let us go away and practice it. Shortly will that *stormy day* arise which must try the *foundation* of our hopes. *God will lay judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.* How thankful should we be that *God has laid in Zion for a foundation, a chief Corner-stone, elect and precious;* with an assurance, that *he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.* (Compare Isaiah xxviii. 16, *et seq.* and 1 Peter ii. 6.) *But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon;* lest the weight of his ruin be proportionable to the height of his hopes. (1 Cor. iii. 10.)

We *say unto Christ, Lord, Lord;* but let us remember this will not secure our *entering into his heavenly kingdom.* Whatever be our *profession*, or whatever our *office* in his church, the most splendid and honourable of *our works* will be vain, if we are found *workers of iniquity;* for our *great Master* will then *disown us* as those whom he has *never approved.* Blessed *Jesus*, it will then be in vain to fly to thee with the importunity of prayer, and to repeat the most earnest addresses. We would now, while yet there is room for it, fall down before thee, entreating thee to add the *teachings* of thy *Spirit* to those of thy *word*, that we may be effectually engaged to *do the will of thine heavenly Father*, that we may finally be *confessed* and owned by thee and be admitted *into the joy of our Lord.*

SECTION XXVIII.

Matthew viii. 1.—Luke v. 1—11.

When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

And it came to pass, that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land: and he sat down and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto *their* partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes, which they had taken: And so *was* also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

How wonderful a choice does *Jesus* make of those who were to be the chief ministers in his kingdom! Surely the same Divine power which prevailed on these honest *fishermen* to *leave* their little *all*, to *follow him*, could with equal ease have subdued the hearts of the greatest and wisest of the nation, and have engaged them to have attended him in all his progress through the country, with the exactest observance and the humblest reverence: but he chose rather to preserve the humble form in which he at first appeared, that thus he might answer the schemes of Providence, and by *the weak things of the world confound them that are mighty.* (1 Cor. i. 27.)

Yet we may observe that he does not go to *call* them that stood *all the day idle;* but, on the contrary, confers this honour upon honest industry; on them that had been *toiling all the night* in their proper duties of their station, and profession in life. Let us pursue our business with vigilance and resolution; assuring ourselves that, however mean it be, *Christ* will graciously accept us in it; and let us fix our dependance on his blessing, as absolutely necessary to our success.

These pious *fishermen let down their nets at Christ's word*, and it was not in vain. How vast was that power which brought such a *multitude of fishes* into it! but how much greater and more apparently Divine was the energy which, by the ministration of one of these illiterate men, converted at once a much greater number of *souls*, and turned the despisers and murderers *of Christ* into his adorers! (See Acts ii. 41.)

Blessed *Jesus*, we would humbly bow ourselves before thee as the Lord of nature and of grace; and instead of saying with *Peter, Depart from us, for we are sinful men*, we would rather say, '*Lord*, for that very reason, while we own ourselves most unworthy of thy presence, we most importunately entreat it: Come unto me, *O Lord, for I am a sinful man*, and if thou stand at a distance from me, I perish! Come, and recover my heart from the tyranny of sin; come, and possess and fix it for thyself!'

That secret power which these good men felt on their souls while the words of *Christ* were sounding in their ears would be to them a *token for good* as to the success of their ministry upon others. Surely we cannot wish any thing of greater importance for the edification of the church, than that the persons who are employed in its public offices may themselves experimentally know the power of Divine grace, and be brought to a determination to *follow Christ* whithersoever he goeth, before they undertake to invite and persuade others to do it.

SECTION XXIX.

MATT. VIII. 2—4. MARK I. 40—45. LUKE V. 12—16.

AND behold, there came a man full of leprosy, who seeing Jesus, and kneeling down unto him, fell on *his* face, worshipped him, and besought him, saying unto him, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth *his* hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will, be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away: and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish *it* much, and to blaze abroad the matter, *and* so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city: For great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. But he withdrew himself, and was without in desert places, and prayed: and they came to him from every quarter.

Our souls are overspread with the *leprosy of sin;* and where should we apply for help but to the healing power and recovering grace of the great *Redeemer.* Be the malady ever so deep, spreading or inveterate, we may surely adopt the words of *the leper* before us, and say, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* And how much reason have we to hope this compassion will be moved in our favour, and his power exerted in our cure!

If we have received that favour, we are under the obligation of *no command to conceal it.* It is, on the contrary, our duty most gratefully to *publish it abroad,* for the honour of our Benefactor, and the advantage of those who may be encouraged to make the same application in humble hope of the same success.

But when will the happy time come that men shall be as solicitous about their *spiritual welfare* as about the *health* of this *mortal body?* Almighty *Physician!* exert thine energy in this instance as a token of farther favours! Convince men of their pollution and danger, and bow their stubborn knee, that it may bend in submissive and importunate supplication!

Let the *compassionate air* with which this cure was wrought, be considered by all *spiritual physicians* as a lesson of condescension and tenderness; and let the *modesty*, with which it was conducted engage us to avoid every appearance of ostentation and vain glory.

To conclude; since *Christ* himself found it proper to *retire into a desert place to pray*, when crowds of admirers were flocking in upon him, let it teach those who are engaged in the scenes of *public business* and fill them up with the greatest applause, yet resolutely to command some *seasons* for *retirement;* as remembering, that the more various and important our *public labours* are, the more evidently do we need to draw down succour by ardent *prayer*, that we may be strengthened and prospered in them.

SECTION XXX.

Matt. ix. 2—8.—Mark ii. 1—12.—Luke v. 17—26.

And again he entered into Capernaum after some days, and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive *them*, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. And it came to pass, on a certain day, as he was teaching, there were Pharisees, and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them. And behold, men came unto him, bringing a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed, which was borne of four. And they sought means to bring him in, and to lay *him* before him. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, nor find by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went upon the house-

top, uncovered the roof where he was, and when they had broken it up, they let him down through the tiling with *his* couch, into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee. And behold, certain of the Scribes and Pharisees sitting there began to reason within themselves, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies! Who can forgive sins but God alone? And immediately, when Jesus perceived in his spirit, that they so reasoned within themselves, knowing their thoughts, he, answering, said unto them, Why reason ye these things? Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is it easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up his bed, and went forth before them all, and departed to his own house, glorifying God, insomuch that when the multitude saw *it*, they marvelled, and were all amazed, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men, and were filled with fear, saying, We never saw it on this fashion, We have seen strange things to-day.

It is a pleasure to reflect upon it that *Christ* was attended by such vast numbers of people, and that they who were *teachers* of others should themselves sit down to hear him. But it is melancholy to reflect on the perverse purposes with which many of them came; and how few did, on the whole, *receive his word into their hearts*, so as to *bring forth fruit unto perfection.* Curiosity led some, and interest others; and some came to find occasion of *hurting him* whose whole business in life was to *do good.* Yet these low, these vile purposes did not prevent *his preaching* and *working miracles before them*, and being ready to exert his *power* for their benefit. Thus courageous and resolute let us be in the discharge of our duty; thus solicitous, that we may not *be overcome of evil*, but may (which, on the whole, is always in some degree practicable) *overcome evil with good.* Rom. xii. 21.

How industrious were the attendants and friends of this poor *paralytic* to obtain a cure for him! What contrivance, what labour did they use to find a proper opportunity to *bring him in*, and *lay him before Jesus*. Ought we not to be as tender and zealous in all the offices of the truest friendship; and to imitate, so far as suits the difference of circumstances, their importunate application and their lively *faith*?

Theirs had its praise and its reward. *Our Lord* said to this distempered person, *Thy sins are forgiven thee*. He *pardoned all his iniquities*, while he *healed all his diseases*. Ps. ciii. 3. This was a blessing that would render the cure yet incomparably more valuable; and this reviving declaration had *the Son of God a power* to add and to pronounce. The *scribes* and *Pharisees*, ignorant and prejudiced as they were, considered such a declaration as *blasphemy*. Their *principle* indeed was right, that *God alone has power to forgive sins*, and it is impious for men to claim it; but their *application* was evidently wrong. The *miraculous effect* plainly shewed the Divine *authority* of the blessed *Jesus*. And he has still *the key of David; he openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth*. Rev. iii. 7. Almighty Saviour, may we each of us receive from thee *forgiveness of our sins;* and we will not complain though our *sicknesses* should not immediately be removed! Let us *glorify God* who has *given this power to his Son;* and thankfully acknowledge that we are ourselves, in many respects, the monuments both of his *pardoning* and *healing* mercy.

SECTION XXXI.

Matt. ix. 9—17.—Mark ii. 13—22.—Luke v. 27—39.

And after these things he went forth again by the sea *side*, and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. And as he passed forth from thence, he saw a publican, named Matthew *or* Levi, *the son* of Alpheus, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: And it came to pass, that as Jesus sat at meat, behold, a great company of publicans and sinners came, and sat down also with him and his disciples, for there were many, and they followed him. But when the Scribes and

Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they murmured against his disciples, saying, Why eateth your Master, *and* why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard *that*, he answering, said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: For I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast, and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast often, and make prayers, but thy disciples fast not, but eat and drink. And Jesus said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast *and* mourn, as long as the Bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the Bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

And he spake also a parable unto them: No man seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old garment, and the rent is made worse, and the piece that was *taken* out of the new, agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine will burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But the new wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved. No man also having drunk old *wine*, straightway desireth new, for he saith, The old is better.

Let us view with humble wonder and pleasure this instance of the condescension and grace of the Redeemer in the call of Matthew; his condescension in calling to so near an attendance and so intimate a friendship, a man who was a publican, infamous as that employment was; and his grace, which could immediately inspire him with so firm a resolution of quitting all the profits of it, that he might reduce himself to circumstances of life as precarious as those of his divine Master. Many, no doubt, censured

him as a rash enthusiast, or a lunatic, rather than a sober convert; but he is even now reaping the abundant reward; his loss is gain, and his contempt glory.

There is no reason to wonder that *Matthew* should gladly embrace so proper an opportunity of introducing other *publicans* and *sinners* into the presence of that condescending *Saviour*, from whom, though he once was numbered among them, he had received *grace* and the *apostleship*. Let us with pleasure observe how ready our blessed *Lord* was to receive them. Surely whatever *offence* the proud *Pharisee* might take on the occasion, *Jesus* will appear peculiarly amiable in such a circle as this.

From the *example of Christ*, and the whole genius of his *gospel*, let us learn to make all proper *allowances* to those about us, that we may teach them, and train them up as *they are able to bear it;* not crushing them under any unnecessary load, nor denying them any indulgence which true friendship will permit us to grant them; lest the good ways of God should be misrepresented, disgraced, abandoned, through our imprudent, though well-meant *severity;* a caution to be peculiarly observed in our conduct towards *young persons;* and not to be forgotten with respect to those who, like the *disciples* here in question, are training up for the *ministerial office*.

PART III.

MATTHEW. VIII. 5—13, 18—34—IX. 1, 10—38, X.—XIV.—MARK II. 23—28—III.—VI.—LUKE VI.—IX. 1—17.—JOHN V. VI.

IN WHICH IS CONTAINED THE PERIOD OF TWELVE MONTHS, FROM THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR'S PREACHING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, IN THE BEGINNING OF TWENTY-EIGHT, TO THE END OF THE SECOND YEAR, IN THE BEGINNING OF TWENTY-NINE.

SECTION I.

JOHN V. 1—16.

AFTER this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep *market* a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water; whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.—When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time *in that case*, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day; it is not lawful for thee to carry *thy* bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk.—Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk? And he that was healed wist not

who it was; for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in *that* place. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

What reason have we humbly to adore that *Almighty Being* who *kills and makes alive*, who *wounds and heals!* (Deut. xxxii. 39.) If the *Jews* had cause of thankfulness for this *miraculous* interposition, surely those virtues which God has in a *natural* way bestowed on *medicines*, and that sagacity which he has given to *men* for the discovery of those virtues, are matter of much greater acknowledgment, as the blessing is so much more extensive and lasting.

But how much greater still are our obligations to him for the *blessings* of his *gospel* and the *ordinances* of his worship, those *waters of life* by which our *spiritual maladies* are healed, and vigour restored to our enfeebled souls! Let us humbly *attend them;* yet during that attendance let us look beyond them: for surely the efficacy of this *pool of Bethesda* did not more depend upon the *descent of the angel*, than the efficacy of the noblest *ordinances* depends on that *blessed Spirit* which operates in and by them.

Multitudes were continually *attending* at this *pool;* and *why then is the house of God forsaken?* where not *one alone*, but *many*, at the same moment, may receive spiritual sight and strength; yea, and life from the dead! Yet, alas! under *the diseases of the soul*, how few *desire to be made whole!* Blessed *Jesus!* if thou hast awakened *that desire* in us, we would adore thee for it as a *token for good;* and would lift up our believing eyes to thee, in humble expectation that thou wilt graciously fulfil it.

The man who was lately languishing *on his couch* we quickly after find *in the temple;* and *where* should *they* be found who have been raised up from *beds of weakness*, and brought out from chambers of confinement, but *in the sanctuary*, rendering their praises to the *God of their mercies?* How reasonable is *the caution* which *our Lord* gave him there! *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.* May we see *sin* as *the root* of all our *afflictions;* and, by the bitterness of *them*, may *sin* be embittered to us, and our hearts fortified against relapsing into it, especially when we have been *chastised*, and *restored again!*

One would have expected that, when this grateful creature published the *name* of his *Benefactor*, crowds should have thronged about *Jesus*, to have heard the *words of his mouth*, and to have received the *blessings of his gospel;* and that the whole nation should have gloried in the *presence* of such a *person*, as far more valuable than the *descent* of a heavenly *spirit* at some particular *seasons* for the cure of their diseases, or even the abode of an incarnate *angel* among them would have been. But instead of this, behold the malignity of our fallen nature, and the force of stubborn prejudice! They surround him with an hostile intent; they even *conspire* against his beneficial *life;* and for an imagined transgression in a point of *ceremony*, would have *put out* this *light in Israel*. Let us not wonder then if *our good be evil spoken of;* (Rom. xiv. 16.) Let us not wonder, if even candour, benevolence, and usefulness, do not wholly disarm the enmity of some; especially of those who have been taught to prefer *sacrifice to mercy;* and who, disrelishing the genuine contents of the *gospel*, naturally seek occasion to slander and persecute the *professors*, and especially the *defenders* of it.

SECTION II.

John v. 17—30.

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the sabbath, but said also, that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth; and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth *them*, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the

Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

With what humble prostration of soul should we bow before the *Lord Jesus Christ* while we read such words as these! Though he appeared under the *form of a servant;* and as *man* and *mediator* confessed a holy subjection to *his Father* and *his God;* yet is he *his own*, his *only-begotten Son*, the *Son whom he loves*, whom he *honours*, whom he commands *all men to honour even as himself*, and to whom such *power* and *authority* are committed, that he is the principle of *life* and the administrator of *judgment.* Let us adore the wisdom of such a contrivance, that he who *humbled himself* thus low should be so *highly exalted.* Let us labour to secure an interest in him; treating him with that submission, duty, and obedience, which becomes at once the *divinity* of his *nature* and the *dignity* of his *office.*

May we be enabled by Divine grace so to *hear the voice* of his gospel, that we may arise to a *life* of holy obedience; that we may another day *hear him* with joy calling forth our sleeping dust, and *arise to the resurrection of life;* while those that have despised and rejected him, shall find themselves the helpless prisoners of his justice, and with reluctance and terror *come forth to the resurrection of damnation!*

SECTION III.

John v. 31—47.

If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man; but these things I say that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have a greater witness than *that* of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that *cometh* from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is *one* that accuseth you, *even* Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

How various is the evidence of our *Redeemer's mission*, and with what pleasure should we trace it in the *testimony* which John bore, the *miracles* which himself wrought, the *testimony of the Father* to him, and the *predictions* which the *prophets* uttered and

recorded! To confirm our faith in all, let us be daily *searching the scriptures*, as the oracles of God and the great fountain of life and salvation. We profess a regard to them; may that regard never be our condemnation! or the blessed *penman* witness against us, as *Moses* against those who gloried in his writings, and yet wanted true faith in them!

In proportion to the degree in which we are convinced of the *truth of Christ's religion*, let us set ourselves to cultivate the *temper* which he exercised. He *sought not glory from men*, but made his *Father's will* the rule of his actions, and his *Father's honour* the end of them. Let us not greedily catch at *human applause*, but aim at an infinitely nobler object, even *the honour that cometh from God alone*, the only true judge of actions and characters, because the only discerner of hearts.

May we have not only *his word* in our hands, but *his love remaining in us;* that thereby our natural aversion to the methods of his saving grace in the gospel may be subdued, that notwithstanding the obstinacy of our degenerate wills we may *come unto Christ that we may have life!* May we *receive him* with the greatest readiness, as *coming* to us *in his Father's name;* and not only *for a season rejoice in his light*, but steadfastly *continue in his word*, as *made known to all nations for the obedience of faith;* that the advantages which we enjoy may not be found to aggravate our guilt and to condemn us with the unbelieving *Jews!*

Christ shewed the tenderness of his compassion even in the severity of his rebukes, and spoke these awful and awakening words that these his unjust and inveterate enemies *might be saved.* May they be the *power of God unto our salvation!* as they will be, if we *believe in him whom he hath sent.*

SECTION IV.

Matthew xii. 1—8.—Mark ii. 23—28.—Luke vi. 1—5.

And it came to psss on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn-fields: and his disciples were an hungered, and began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat, rubbing *them* in *their* hands. But when the Pharisees saw *it*, certain of *them* said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath-day? They said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath-day. And Jesus answering

them said unto them. Have ye never read so much as this, what David did, when he had need and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him; How he went into the house of God in the days of Ahimelech the high-priest, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath-days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, that in this place is *one* greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

With pleasure we observe the zeal which these attendants of *Christ* express, who chose on a *sacred festival* to expose themselves to *hunger* as well as toil, rather than they would lose the benefit of his instructions, which, like the heavenly *manna* on the day preceding the *sabbath*, were *then* poured out in a *double* plenty. But what numerous auditory is so candid as to contain none who come, like these *Pharisees*, with a desire to cavil rather than to learn! The malignity of *their temper* sufficiently appeared in taking *exception* at so small a circumstance: *hypocrites* that could thus *strain at a gnat* and yet *swallow a camel*, (Mat. xxiii. 24,) scrupling to *rub out a few grains of corn*, while they sought to *devour widows' houses*, and were, under this grave *mask* of the strictest piety, *inwardly full of rapine and wickedness.* (Luke xx. 47, and xi. 39.)

Let us attend to the *apology Christ* makes for *his disciples.* It speaks his own *authority*, as *greater than the temple*, and *Lord of the sabbath;* and well might he, *in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, without the least presumption, use such language as this. It likewise declares much of the *genius of his religion*, which deals not in *forms* and *ceremonies*, and *dispenses* even with *rituals* of a Divine appointment, when *humanity* and *benevolence* interfere with the observance of them. Since *God will have mercy rather than sacrifice*, let us abhor the perverseness and wickedness of those who sacrifice *mercy* itself, not merely to *ceremonies* of a *Divine original*, but to their own arbitrary invention, superstitious dreams, and precarious, though confident determinations. Let us practice habitual *caution* and *candour*, lest, before we are aware,

we *condemn the innocent* and the pious, and become guilty of what is much more displeasing in the sight of God than the faults which a peevish and censorious temper may fancy it discovers in our brethren.

SECTION V.

Matthew xii. 9—14.—Mark iii. 1—6.—Luke vi. 6—11.

And it came to pass also on another sabbath, when he was departed thence, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and behold, there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the Scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath-day: and they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-days? that they might find an accusation against him. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath-days to good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy *it?* But they held their peace. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift *it* out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath-days.—And when he had looked round about upon them all with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and his hand was restored whole, like as the other.

Then the Pharisees went out, and were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus: And straightway took counsel

with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

What *actions* are so fair and lovely, that *malice* cannot turn them into reproach? What *characters* are so unblemished, what so exemplary, that *uncharitableness* cannot revile and condemn them? While the eyes of distressed *multitudes* were turned to *Christ* as their only Physician and most valuable Friend, the eyes of the *Pharisees* are continually *upon him for evil;* and they behold his wondrous *miracles*, not for their own *conviction*, but that they may, if possible, turn them into the means of his *destruction*. So ineffectual are the most obvious and demonstrative *arguments*, till divine grace conquer men's natural aversion to a Redeemer's kingdom, and *captivate* their hearts *to the obedience of faith.*

To have reviled and dishonoured *Christ* and to have endeavoured to prevent the success of his ministry, had been a daring crime: but these desperate wretches *conspire against his life;* and different as their principles and interests were, form a transient friendship to be cemented by his blood. Blessed *Jesus*, well mightest thou say, *Many good works have I shewn you, and for which of them would you* murder me? (John x. 32.)

What *reasoning* could be more plain and forcible than this which *our Lord* used? and yet, like *deaf adders*, they *stop their ears*, and harden their hearts against it. Inhuman creatures, that were more concerned for the safety of a *sheep* than the happiness of a *man*. Yet, would to God that unworthy temper had died with them; for surely there are those, even among *professing Christians*, who regard their *cattle* more than even the *souls* committed by Providence to their care, and therefore, no doubt, more than *their own* too!

The *indignation* which *Christ* felt on this occasion was a just and amiable passion. Happy they, whose *anger*, like his, only awakened by *sin*, and burns only to destroy that *accursed thing!*

The malice of the *Pharisees* did not restrain the benevolence of our compassionate *Saviour*, nor deprive the poor *patient* of his *cure*. Such let our conduct be! Let us *not be overcome of evil;* let not the most unjust censures, or the most malicious opposition break our spirits so as to prevent us from doing our duty. If others are *mad* with persecuting rage, let us pity them; and let all their fury against the cause of God be improved as a motive to excite our most zealous and courageous endeavours for its service.

SECTION VI.

Matt. xii. 15—21.—Mark iii. 7—12.

But when Jesus knew *it*, he withdrew himself from thence with his disciples to the sea: and great multitudes followed him from galilee, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and *from* beyond Jordan, and he healed them; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him, because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. For he had healed many, insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. For there went virtue out of him, and healed them all. And they that were vexed with uncleaned spirits were healed. And the unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.—And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

Surely *face* does not more exactly *answer to face in water* than the character of *Christ* drawn by the *prophet* to his temper and conduct as described by the *Evangelists*. How should *Zion rejoice*, and the *daughter of Jerusalem shout*, that such a *King cometh unto her, meek and having salvation*. (Zech. ix. 9.) Let us with pleasure trace his *gentle administration*, and with a cheerful confidence commit our souls to so kind and so faithful a hand: far from from *breaking*, he will strengthen the *bruised reed;* far from *quenching the smoking flax*, he will rather blow it up into a flame.

How well does it become the *disciples of Christ*, and especially how well does it become his *ministers*, to imitate what was so amiable in their *Lord*, and not to *despise the day of small things*. Let us not *strive nor cry;* but, laying aside all unnecessary contentions and angry debates, let us *receive one another as Christ hath received us*, (Rom. xv. 7.) and, avoiding all vain *ostentation*, let us silently and meekly attend, each of us, to the discharge of his proper office. So may we hope that the cause of religion will go on successfully around us, and that *righteousness* will in due time be *brought forth to* complete *victory* over all opposition, and by its own genuine influences, be happily *established in the earth*.

The Gentiles trust in a Redeemer's name, and the *British Isles* are numbered among those that *wait for his law*. May our souls with humble submission bow themselves to receive it, and observe it with such faithful care and obedient regards, that our example, wherever it is seen, may promote the reception of it among those that as yet are strangers to it!

SECTION VII.

Matt. x. 2—4.—Mark iii. 13—19.—Luke vi. 12—19.

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples, whom he would, and they came unto him: and of them he chose and ordained twelve, whom also he named apostles: And ordained that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach: And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: the first, Simon, (whom he also surnamed Peter,) and Andrew his brother, and James *the son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, (and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder,) and Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew the publican, and Thomas, James *the son* of Alpheus, and Simon the Canaanite, called Zelotes, and Judas Thaddeus, *the brother* of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him. And they went into an house.

Luke iv. 17—49.

And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and a company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judæa and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; and they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed *them* all.

When we consider how much the church in all ages has been indebted to the labours of *the apostles*, and how much we ourselves owe them, we shall see great reason of thankfulness to our wise and gracious Master, who was pleased to assign this work to his servants, and so eminently to qualify them for it. It is observable, that *before he sent them forth* he chose them *to be with him* in a more constant attendance on his person and ministry. May all who succeed them as *preachers of the gospel*, be such as have intimately *known Christ* themselves, and have been accustomed to spiritual converse *with him;* that they may with the greater ability, zeal, and efficacy, recommend him to others!

We may assure ourselves that these his future *ministers* had no inconsiderable share in those *petitions* in which, with unabating fervour and intenseness of devotion, *our Redeemer* spent this memorable *night.* And if we have any regard for the support of religion in the rising age, let us likewise be earnestly *praying* both for them that are already *in the ministry*, and for such as are *preparing for it.* This surely ought to be the frequent care, not only of those who have the *tremendous charge of educating such* as are ere long to be intrusted with the honour of the gospel and the care of souls, but those who are now struggling with the glorious labours and trials of that important office, and even of all those *private christians*, who cordially love the interest of their Master, and wish the salvation of their fellow-creatures.

Let us unite our cries to him who has engaged to be *always with his church even to the end of the world*, and say, "Light up, *O Lord*, a brighter and a stronger flame in the lamps of thy sanctuary! Polish these arrows of thy quiver, that they may pierce deep into the consciences of men! Let thy *priests be clothed with salvation*, that thy *saints* may *shout aloud for joy.* And pour forth upon them so plenteous an *unction* of thine *Holy Spirit*, that the odours of thy grace may by their means be diffused

around throughout all thy tabernacles; like that of the fragrant oil, which was poured on *the head of Aaron*, in such rich abundance, that it not only *ran down on his beard*, but even reached *to the skirts of his garments.* Amen, and amen.

SECTION VIII.

Luke vi. 20—36.

And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said Blessed *be ye* poor; for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed *are ye* that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed *are ye* that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reprove *you*, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward *is* great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not *to take thy* coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods, ask *them* not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to *them*

of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again: and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and *to* the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

How necessary is it, that our forgetful hearts should have *line upon line, and precept upon precept?* If *Christ* did not think it improper to *repeat his discourse*, surely it will not be needless for us to *renew our attention* to it. Oh that every word of it were *engraven on our hearts as with the point of a diamond*, that we might learn, in spite of all the foolish wisdom of this world, to form ourselves on these maxims, as the surest guide to present and to eternal felicity!

Our Lord again pronounces the *poor* and the *hungry*, the *mournful*, and the *persecuted*, *happy;* and represents those as *miserable* who are *rich* and *full*, *joyous* and *applauded;* not that this is universally the case; but because prosperous circumstances are so frequently a sweet poison, and affliction a healing though bitter medicine. Let the thought reconcile us to *adversity*, and awaken our caution when the *world smiles* upon us; when a *plentiful table* is spread before us, and our *cup runneth over;* when our *spirits* are *gay* and sprightly; or when we hear, what to corrupted nature is too harmonious *music*, that of *our own praise* from men. Oh that we may secure, what is of infinitely greater importance, the *praise of our heavenly Master*, by a constant obediential regard to these his precepts!

May we be happy proficients in the art of *bearing* and *forgiving injuries.* May we be *ready to every good word and work*, maintaining an *eye* quick to observe, a *heart* tender to feel, a *hand* open to relieve the *calamities* and *necessities* of *friends*, of *strangers* and of *enemies*, *giving* to some, and where, perhaps, there may be little prospect of a return; *lending* to others, which, if it engage them to greater industry, is as real a benefit as if the *loan* were a *gift.*

On the whole, let us not presume to call God *our Father*, if we do not labour to *resemble him;* nor dare to challenge the peculiar honour and privileges of *Christ's disciples*, if we do not distinguish ourselves from others by the *charity* of our *tempers* and the *usefulness* of our *lives*, as well as by the *articles* of our *faith* and the *forms* of our *worship.*

SECTION IX.

Luke vi. 37—49.

Judge not and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive and ye shall be forgiven: give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom: for with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye. For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit: for every tree is known by his own fruit: for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of his heart the mouth speaketh.

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, I will shew you to whom he is like: he is like to a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the floods arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was

founded on a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Let a frequent reflection on our own faults teach us *candour;* and let a sense of our continued dependence on Divine liberality make us *liberal* towards those that need our assistance; lest we lose the comfort so justly forfeited, and *abused mercies* be another day repaid with *measures of wrath, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.*

We are another day to give an account of ourselves before God: let us judge then for ourselves in matters of religion; and be very careful that we do not stupidly follow *blind guides*, till *we fall with them* into destruction. "*Lead us*, O Lord, *in the way everlasting!* Form us to a more perfect *resemblance* of our great *Master!* Make us *severe to ourselves*, and, so far as it is real charity, *indulgent to others!* Sanctify *our hearts* by thy grace, that they may be as *trees bringing forth good fruit*, or as *fountains* pouring out wholesome streams! *There* may a *good treasure* be laid up, from whence *good things* may be abundantly produced! *There* may those holy and benevolent *affections* continually spring up, which may flow forth with unaffected freedom, to refresh the souls and animate the graces of all that are around us!"

May these beautiful, striking, repeated *admonitions*, which our *Saviour* gives us of the vanity of every *profession* which does not influence the *practice*, be attended to with reverence and fear! We are *building for eternity;* may we never grudge the time and labour of a most serious inquiry into the great fundamental principles of religion? May we discover *the sure foundation*, and raise upon it a noble superstructure, which shall stand fair and glorious, when *hypocrites* are swept away into everlasting ruin, *in that awful day* in which *heaven and earth shall flee away from the face of him that sits upon the throne!* (Rev. xx. 11.)

SECTION X.

Matt. viii. 5—13.—Luke vii. 1—10.

Now when Jesus had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum; and when he was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a certain centurion, beseeching him

for his servant, who was dear to him, *and who* was sick of the palsy, and ready to die, being grievously tormented. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this. For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Jesus saith, I will come and heal him. Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof.—Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having soldiérs under me: And I say unto one, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.—And I say unto you, That many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way, and as thou hast believed, *so* be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self-same hour. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

It is pleasant to think of this good *centurion*, who amidst all the temptations of a military life, retained the principles, not only of liberality and humanity, but of piety too; and, probably amidst the raillery of his irreligious and idolatrous brethren, had the courage to frequent, and even to *build a synagogue*. Surely his *devotion* did not enervate, but rather invigorate and establish his

valour; nor did he find himself less dutifully regarded by the *soldiers* under his command for his parental tenderness to his afflicted *servant,* which brought him thus humbly to *petition Christ* in his favour. Such may *our officers* be! and we may hope *the hosts of heaven* will with pleasure *cover their heads in the day of battle,* and obedient *troops* be formed, by their example and their care, to the discipline of *virtue* as well as of *war.*

We see the force of real *goodness* to conquer the most inveterate *prejudices! the elders of the Jews at Capernaum* turn petitioners for a *Gentile*—for a *Roman centurion!* so may we disarm the virulency of a *party spirit,* and conciliate the *friendship* of those who otherwise might have their *eyes upon us for evil!*

In plentiful circumstances and an honourable station, how great is the *humility* of this *worthy man!* How low are the thoughts that he has of himself! And with what veneration and respect does he address himself to *Christ!* And, had *this centurion* been even a *tribune* or a *general,* this humble address would well have become him when he was thus applying unto *Christ.* And how well does it become us, when entreating the blessed *Jesus* to exert his healing power on our hearts, to bow with deep humility before him, and to say, "*Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof,* or *worthy the honour of appearing in thy presence!*" *He that* thus *humbleth himself shall be exalted,* (Luke xviii. 14.) nor do we ever stand fairer for the *praise of Christ* than when we see ourselves *undeserving* even of *his notice.*

Behold an instance of *faith* in a *stranger to the commonwealth of Israel,* by which *their unbelief* was *condemned!* Oh that the *virtues of heathens* may not another day *rise up* to *our condemnation,* notwithstanding an higher profession and much nobler advantages! We cannot but rejoice to hear that *many shall come from the east and the west, to sit down with the pious patriarchs in the kindom of heaven!* but how deplorable is the case of those *children of the kingdom,* who, with all their towering expectations, *shall be cast out,* and doomed to hopeless *sorrow* and to everlasting *darkness!*

May *Almighty Grace* awaken those who are now ignorant of the value and importance of the *blessings* of the gospel; and excite those *holy desires* after them, which may prevent that *impatience* and *envy,* that *rage* and *despair,* with which they must otherwise view them at an unapproachable distance; yea, view them possessed by multitudes, whom they are now ready to despise!

SECTION XI.

Luke vii. 11—18.

And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother: and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak: and he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God had visited his people. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about. And the disciples of John shewed him all these things.

It surely becomes *us* likewise to *glorify God* on account of *this great Prophet*, whom he has *raised up*, not only to *his* ancient *people Israel*, but *to be for salvation to the ends of the earth.* (Acts xiii. 47.) Welcome, thou Messenger of the Father's love! How illustrious thy miracles! how important thy doctrine! how beneficent and amiable the whole of thy behaviour.

He went from *Capernaum* to *Nain*, still on the same blessed errand, to *do good* to the *bodies* and the *souls* of men. Oh that our lives, in their humbler sphere, might be such a circle of virtues and graces; that we might thus *go about doing good;* and might learn, by the happiest of all arts, to make the close of one useful and pious action the beginning of another!

Of him may we also learn the most *engaging manner* of conferring benefits; that lovely mixture of *freedom* and *tenderness*, which heightens the sweetness, and doubles the value of every favour! May *our hearts* imbibe the *same temper*, and it will diffuse on our actions some proportionable *gracefulness.* May *our bowels*, like his, *yearn over the afflicted*, and *our hand* be ever

ready thus gently to *wipe away their tears.* But, O Gracious *Redeemer,* how impotent is *our pity* when compared with *thine;* with *thine,* which could call back lamented *children* from the *grave,* and turn the *sorrows* of a *weeping parent* into a torrent of *joy.* We are sometimes ready fondly to say, "Oh that thou hadst been *near* when the darlings of our hearts were snatched away from us, and we left them in the dust!" But thou indeed wast *near;* for *thou hast the keys of death and the unseen world.* And this we know, that, if our beloved *children* are *sleeping* in thee, *thy voice* shall at length awaken them; and thou wilt *deliver them to us,* to *die no more;* and wilt *thyself* graciously *take part* in that mutual and lasting *joy* which thou shalt give to us and to them.

SECTION XII.

Matt. xi. 2—6.—Luke vii. 19—23.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he calling *unto him* two of his disciples, sent *them* unto Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? And in that same hour he cured many of *their* infirmities, and plagues, and of evil spirits, and to many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering, said unto them, Go your way and tell John again what things ye have seen and heard, *how* that the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

We have here in *John the Baptist* a very edifying instance of a most candid and pious temper. How solicitous was he to remove those *scruples* from the minds of *his disciples* which, perhaps, their excessive *fondness for him* might have occasioned! He wisely *sends them* to converse with *Jesus* themselves: and surely they who most accurately inquire into the *credentials* he brings, will be most effectually convinced and impressed by them.

Let us, when tempted to doubt of the *truth of Christianity*, recollect the various and unanswerable *proofs* of it, which are summed up in these comprehensive words; arising from the *miracles* and *character* of our *Redeemer*, and the *prophetic testimony* that was borne to him. Let us particularly rejoice that *the poor have the gospel preached:* and that the *blessings* of it are offered to enrich the souls of those, whose bodily necessities we often *pity*, without having it in our power to *relieve* them.

And, since *our Lord* pronounces *a blessing* upon those *that shall not be offended in him*, let us consider what those things are, in the doctrine or circumstances of *Christ*, which have proved the most dangerous *stumbling-blocks*, and endeavour to fortify our souls against those temptations which may arise from them. So *the trial of* that *faith* which is a *much more valuable* treasure *than gold which perishes, though tried in the fire*, may *be found unto praise, and honour, and glory*, (1 Peter i. 7,) and we, on the whole, may be advanced in our way by *incidents* which at first threatened to turn us entirely out of it; as the *faith* of these *disciples of John* must surely be confirmed by those *doubts* which they had for a while entertained.

SECTION XIII.

Matt. xi. 7—19. Luke vii. 24—35.

And when the messengers of John were departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold they that wear soft clothing, and are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. But what went ye out for to see? a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For, verily, I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater prophet than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suf-

fereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced: we have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of all her children.

How happy would it be, if we could learn to correct the natural *inconsistencies* of our temper and conduct by wise reflections and considerations! How much more improving would our *attendance* on the ministrations of God's servants be, were we seriously to ask ourselves *to what purpose we attended*!

It ought surely to be followed with such considerations, since it is intended to lead us to *the kingdom of heaven;* a glorious prize! too glorious to be obtained by faint wishes and inactive desires. There is a sense in which it still *suffers violence;* and how sad is the degeneracy of our natures, that we should exert *so little warmth* in such a pursuit, and *so much* for every trifle! Instead of that *holy ardour* with which men should *press into it*, they fold their hands in their bosoms, and lose themselves in soft luxurious dreams, till the precious opportunity is for ever gone. May Divine Grace display the *crowns* and *palms* of victory before our eyes, in so awakening a manner, that we may joyfully *seize them*, whatever *obstacles* may lie in our way, whatever must be *done*, or whatever must be *borne* to secure them!

Let us not, as we love our own souls, through a proud self-sufficiency *reject the* gracious *counsels of God* which are addressed to us, lest we should be another day *condemned* by *publicans and sinners*. Divine providence and grace are using a variety of me-

thods with us: let not our perverseness and folly, like that of the *Jews*, *frustrate* them all; but rather let us shew ourselves *the children of wisdom*, by falling in with its measures and improving as well as applauding them.

SECTION XIV.

Matthew xi. 20—30.

Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

What can we imagine more dreadful than the guilt and condemnation of those who hear the gospel only to despise it! How can we read the doom of *Chorazin*, *Bethsaida*, and *Capernaum*, without trembling for ourselves, lest we should incur the like sentence! Such have been our religious advantages and opportunities, that, like them, we have indeed been *lifted up to heaven*. The *Lord* grant that we may not, by our misimprovement and disobedience, be *cast down to the lowest hell!* that *Tyre* and *Sidon*, and even *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, may not at last *rise up in judgment against us*, and call down on our heads *a punishment more intolerable* than *that* which has fallen upon *them*, or which they must even then feel!

Our vain *curiosity* may perhaps be ready to ask, Why were *these advantages* given to them that *abused* them, rather than to those who would have *improved* them better? But let us impose upon our minds a reverential silence; since the great *Lord of heaven and earth giveth not an account of any of his matters*. (Job xxxiii. 13.) It is *so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight!*

Still we see the *gospel hid* from many who are esteemed the *wisest* and *most prudent* of mankind; and, blessed be *God*, we still see it *revealed* to some, who, in comparison of them, are but *babes*. Let not this *offend us;* but rather taking our notions from the *word of God*, let us learn to *honour* these *babes* as possessed of the truest *wisdom*, and adore the riches of *Divine grace*, if we are in their number, while many of *superior capacities* are left to *stumble at this stone* till they fall into final ruin.

Whatever objections are brought against *Christ* and *his ways*, may we ever adhere to them, *since all things are delivered to him by the Father!* From him therefore may we seek the true *knowledge of God*, as ever we desire everlasting life!

We have all our *burdens* of *sin* and of *sorrow!* While we *labour* under them, let us with pleasure hear the *gentle* and melodious *voice* of *a Redeemer*, thus *kindly inviting us* to *come unto him, that we may find rest to our souls*. Let us with pleasure subject ourselves to him, and go on in our holy course with that improvement and cheerfulness which become those who learn by their own daily experience that *his commandments are not grievous*, and feel that *his yoke is easy and his burden is light*.

SECTION XV.

Luke vii. 36—50.

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment; and stood at his feet, behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe *them* with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw *it*, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that *he*, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.

How joyful an *assurance* must this be to a soul thus bowed down and humbled in the very dust under a sense of sin! How light did the *reproaches of men* sit upon her when she heard these *reviving words* from the mouth of the great *Saviour*, who alone had authority to pronounce them!

Our hearts surely upbraid us with *many* and aggravated *sins;* but we hear the tidings of *pardon;* let us gladly embrace it; and acknowledging that not *five hundred pence*, nor even *ten thousand talents*, are sufficient to express the *greatness of our debt;* let us retain the *remembrance* of it, even when we hope that *God has forgiven it;* and let us labour that the tenderness of our love, the warmth of our zeal, and the steadiness of our obedience, may in some measure be proportionable to it: and, *blessed Jesus*, how distinguished must they then be!

Let us with humble pleasure approach this compassionate *Friend of sinners;* who, though in one sense separate from them, yet thus freely and graciously encouraged *the chief of them* to apply to him, though he well knew *that condescension* would expose him to the *censure* of the self-conceited *Pharisees.* May God preserve us from that arrogant *confidence in our own righteousness*, which, while it leads us to *despise some*, perhaps much dearer to him than ourselves, would proportionably sink our value for the *Saviour*, and our *love* to him!

As for what remains, let the *candour* with which *Christ* accepted this *invitation*, and the *gentleness* and *prudence* with which he behaved at this ensnaring entertainment, teach us to mingle the *wisdom of the serpent* with the *innocence* and sweetness *of the dove;* and neither absolutely to refuse all *favours*, nor severely to resent all *neglects* from those, whose friendship might at best be very *dubious*, and their *intimacy* by no means *safe.*

To conclude; let us avoid that very *ill temper* which *this Pharisee* shewed in *upbraiding* this poor humble *penitent* with the scandals of her former life. Where we have reason to believe that *sin* has been lamented and forsaken, and consequently that *God has forgiven it*, let us cheerfully receive those whom *our holy Master* has not rejected; and if the remembrance of *former irregularities* cannot be entirely lost, let it only engage us to magnify the *riches of Divine grace* toward such persons, and to rejoice with them in the display of it.

SECTION XVI.

MATTHEW XII. 22—32. MARK III. 20—21.
LUKE VIII. 1—3.

AND it came to pass afterward, that Jesus went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard *of it*, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said he is beside himself. Then was brought unto him one possessed of a devil, blind and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?

MATTHEW XII. 24—34. MARK III. 22—30.

But the Pharisees, when they heard *it*, and the Scribes which came down from Jerusalem, said, This *fellow* hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. But Jesus knew their thoughts, and called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan rise up against *and* cast out Satan, he is divided against himself: how shall then his kingdom stand? He cannot stand, but hath an end. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out

devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. Wherefore, verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men: And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come; but he is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

How *condescending* was the conduct of the blessed *Jesus* while he dwelt among us! Though he was *Lord of all*, he not only waved the pompous manner of subsisting by continued *miracles*, but likewise declined to *dwell* with the *rich* and the *great*, with whom he could easily have secured to himself a constant abode. He chose a laborious *itinerant course*, and subsisted chiefly on the *bounty* of a few *pious women*, whose company and friendship he did not despise. *That subsistence* was most pleasing to him which was the greatest testimony of the *respect* and *affection* of his *hearers*, and at the same time gave the greatest opportunity to testify his own *humility* and *self-denial*, and to pursue his schemes for public usefulness. So may his *followers*, and especially his *ministers*, always judge! And may all the *great things* they *seek for themselves* be such as lie on the *other side of the grave*, and are to be enjoyed in the presence of our *glorified Master*.

We have seen another *triumph of Christ* over the *evil spirit*, another of those glorious and delightful instances, in which the great *Captain of our salvation*, with superior strength, *bound the strong man, and spoiled his goods*. May the *victory* still be carried on *to perfection!* May his *merciful alarms* break the dangerous and fatal *peace* in which the *slaves of Satan* are for a while detained, that he may with greater advantage, and greater terror, plunge them into final and eternal *ruin!* And, in such a *contest*, may we abhor *neutrality*. With pleasure and zeal let us *list ourselves* under the *Redeemer's banners*, that we

may share *his trophies!* And, while others are throwing away their time, their labour and their souls, may we, by *gathering with him* secure to ourselves *everlasting riches!*

We must surely be *astonished* to hear of that perverse and malignant *interpretation* which these wretches put on such convincing *miracles;* and it must move our *indignation* to see the *Son of God* maliciously charged as an *associate with Satan. If they have* thus *called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of his household?* (Matt. x. 25.) Let us learn to imitate that *meekness of wisdom*, with which the *blessed Jesus* pursues his *vindication.* Oh that *his followers* had ever traced it! Yea, I had almost said, Oh that they had learned, even from the *union* of *confederate enemies*, the *danger* of that *house* or *kingdom* which is unnaturally *divided against itself!*

It is matter of great *thankfulness* thus expressly to hear that *every other sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven;* but *awful* to think that the *blasphemy against the Holy Ghost* is excepted. Let those, who, while they cannot deny the *facts of Christianity*, despise and oppose its *doctrines*, tremble to think how near they approach to the boundaries of *this sin*, which is perhaps more *obscurely described* that we may more *cautiously avoid* all such approaches. But let not the *humble soul*, that *trembles at God's word*, meditate *terror* to itself from such a passage; which, when viewed in its *due connexion*, cannot, with any shadow of reason, be thought to belong to any, who do not *obstinately reject the gospel*, and *maliciously oppose it*, when made known to them with its *fullest evidence.*

SECTION XVII.

Matthew xii. 33—45.

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good: or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words

thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Then certain of the Scribes and of the Pharisees tempting him answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from heaven from thee. But he answered and said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas *is* here. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn them; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon *is* here.

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Let us especially attend to those instructions we have here received, and judge of ourselves *by our fruits;* never flattering ourselves that our *hearts* are *good*, if our *lives* are *abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.* (Titus i. 16.) And in particular let us remember, that not our *actions* only, but the *fruits of our lips*, are to be brought into the solemn *account* which we must give to the great *Judge of all the earth;* and that *the day* is coming, when all our *idle* and *unprofitable talk*, which has proceeded *from the evil treasure* of a *depraved heart*, will undergo a strict examination, and we must answer not for our *actions* only, but *shall be justified* or *condemned* by our *words.* And, if *foolish* and *wicked speeches* are to be accounted for in the *day of judgment*, let us *set a watch on the door*

of our lips to prevent them: and labour daily to use our *tongue* so, that it may indeed be, as it is *in scripture* called, *our glory.* (Psalm xvi. 9, xxx. 12.)

For that purpose, let it be our great care to lay up *a good treasure* of Christian knowledge and experience *in our hearts;* that while too many are poisoning those that are round about them with erroneous principles and vicious discourses, *the opening of our lips* may be of *righteous things;* and we may still be ready, upon all proper occasions, with freedom, variety, and spirit, to *bring forth good and profitable things from the good treasure of our hearts;* which may be *edifying* unto those that hear us, and may go from one *heart* to another. So will *the Lord* himself *hearken* with pleasure unto what we *speak*, and exactly record it in the *book of remembrance* that is *written before him;* and producing it at last to our public honour, will own us for *his*, *in the day when he makes up his jewels.* (Mal. iii. 16, 17.)

Let us, to whom the revelation of the *gospel* is so clearly made, *fear*, lest these dreadful things should come upon us, and the abuse of our advantages should render us an easy prey to *Satan*, and a fit habitation for the *powers of darkness.* Let those particularly fear it, who, having been brought to some serious impressions and some external reformation, are tempted to *relapse* into former vices, which would render their *latter end* far *worse than their beginning*, (2 Peter ii. 20;) *God* has permitted some such *awful instances* to occur; and unhappy wretches, perhaps, some of them *the children of religious parents* too, who were once *not far from the kingdom of God*, have so abandoned every principle of religion, and every sentiment of wisdom and virtue, that it seems as if *seven devils* had possessed them, and were driving them headlong to destruction.

May we, instead of *demanding further evidence of Christianity* than the wisdom of God has seen fit to give us, make it our care to *hear* and *obey* and diligently improve the light we have received! May we be brought to a sincere and lasting *repentance* by the *preaching of Christ* and *his apostles*, lest the *Ninevites rise up in judgment against us and condemn us!* May we own the superior *wisdom* of this *Divine Teacher*, this better *Solomon;* and say, as the *queen of Sheba* to the *Jewish prince*, (1 Kings x. 8.) *Happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom!* for *thou speakest as never man spake*, (John vii. 46;) and *in thee all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid*, (Col. ii. 3.) But oh, how many are *curious to know* what little concerns them, and are fond of improving their own *wit* and trying that of others by *hard questions*, while the far more obvious and important points of wisdom are neglected as beneath their regard; as if every thing were more necessary

than being *wise to salvation!* We need not travel to *distant climates* to learn this heavenly philosophy; no, it is *nigh us, even in our mouth;* and we are, on that account, so much the more inexcusable if it be not also *in our heart.* (Rom. x. 8.)

SECTION XVIII.

Matthew xii. 46—50. Mark iii. 31—35.

While he yet talked to the people, behold, there came then his mother and his brethren, and standing without, sent unto him, calling him, desiring to speak with him. And the multitude sat about him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

So may it be our care to *do the will of God*, that we may be thus *dear to our Redeemer*, who ought by so many tender bonds to be *dear to us;* and who, by such gracious and indulgent declarations, as these which we have now been reading, is *drawing us* as with *the cords of a man*, and with *the bands of love!*

Still does *the light* of his Divine instructions shine with the brightest *lustre*, and diffuse itself around us! Let us open the *eyes* of our mind with *singleness* and *simplicity* to receive it; and make it our care to act according to it. *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord*, (Hosea vi. 3.) and thus with cheerfulness shall we reap the fruit of a *well informed mind* and a *well regulated life!*

May we be delivered from all those *false maxims* which would *darken our hearts* amidst all this *meridian lustre*, and turn our boasted *light* into *darkness!* Would to God there were not renewed instances of this kind continually occurring among us; and that we did not daily meet with persons whose *pretended wisdom* teaches them to forget or despise *the gospel*, and so serves only to *amuse their eyes*, while it *leads their feet to the chambers of death!*

SECTION XIX.

MATTHEW XIII. 1—17. MARK IV. 1—9.
LUKE VIII. 4—8.

THE same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side, and began again to teach. And great multitudes were gathered together again, and were come to him out of every city, so that he went into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

And he spake unto them, and taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, Hearken; behold, a sower went out to sow his seed. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way side, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air came, and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth. But as soon as it sprang up, when the sun was up, it was scorched, and because it had no root, *and* lacked moisture, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. But other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and increased; and brought forth fruit, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred-fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And the disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but unto them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled

the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand : and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive : For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed ; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see : and your ears for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them ;* and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them.*

Let us hear with fear and trembling these awful declarations from the lips of the compassionate *Jesus* himself. Here were crowds about *Christ*, who indulged such prejudices, and attended with such perverse dispositions, that in righteous judgment he took an *obscurer method of preaching* to them, and finally left many of them under darkness and impenitency to *die in their sins.*

Let us take heed lest the bounties of Divine providence should be thus abused by us, as a means of casting us into a *stupid insensibility* of the hand and voice of the *blessed God :* or we may otherwise have ground to fear lest he should leave us to our own *delusions*, and *give us up to the lusts of our own hearts.* And then the privilege of *ordinances*, and of the most awakening *providential dispensations* will be *vain ; seeing we shall see, and not perceive : and hearing we shall hear, and not understand.*

It is our peculiar *happiness* under the *gospel* that *we see* and *hear* what *prophets* and *princes* and *saints of old*, *desired to see and hear*, but were not favoured with it. Let us be thankful for our privilege, and improve it well ; lest a *neglected gospel* by the righteous judgment of God be *taken away*, and our *abused seasons of grace*, by one method of Divine displeasure or other, be brought to a speedy *period.* But if by grace *it is given to us to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*, let us learn a thankfulness in some measure proportionable to the corrupt *prejudices* which have been overborne, and the important *blessings* which are secured to us.

SECTION XX.

MATTHEW XIII. 24—43.

ANOTHER parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the househould came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

And his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Oh that these important instructions might, as it were, be ever sounding in our ears! It is a matter of great *thankfulness*

that *this earth*, which might have been abandond by God as a *barren wilderness*, is cultivated as *his field*, and that any *good seed* is to be found in it; but *grievous* to think how many *tares* are intermingled, so as almost to over-run the ground, and hide *the wheat* from being seen. Let not a *forward zeal* prompt us, like these over-officious *servants*, to think of *rooting them out* by violence; but let us *wait our master's time* and be patient till *the day of the Lord.*

The *separation* will at length be made; nor shall *one precious grain* perish. Awful important time! when *the angels* shall perform their great office with a *sagacity* too sharp to be eluded, and a *power* too strong to be resisted! *Gather not our souls, O Lord, with sinners!* but may they be *bound up in the bundle of life!* that when *the day cometh, which shall burn as an oven*, and when *the wicked like chaff* shall be thrown in *to be consumed*, we may survey the *execution* of the *Divine judgment* with awful triumph; being owned by God as *his*, while he is *making up his jewels, and spared by him as his obedient children.* (Mal. iii. 17, and iv. 1.) Then shall we not only be *spared*, but *honoured* and adorned, and *shine forth like the sun in our father's kingdom;* for these *vile bodies shall be fashioned like to the glorious body of our Redeemer*, (Phil. iii. 21.) and our purified and perfected *spirits* shall be clothed with proportionable *lustre*, and reflect the complete *image of his* holiness.—Amen.

SECTION XXI.

Matt. xiii. 31—35. Mark iv. 26—34.

And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

And another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field; which

indeed is the least of all seeds that be in the earth. But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree ; and shooteth out great branches, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof, *and* under the shadow of it.

Another parable spake he unto them ; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. And all these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables, and with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them : and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples : That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables ; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Let us be concerned to *gather up these fragments, that nothing may be lost;* and to lay them up in our memories and our hearts, that, according to our respective stations in life, we may have them *ready for use.*

Let us remember that sometimes the *growth of piety* in the heart *is like* that of *vegetables in the earth.* The *seed of the word* may for a while *seem lost;* or when the *fruit* appears, it may advance and ripen but *slowly.* Let not *ministers* therefore too confidently conclude they have *laboured in vain, and spent their strength for nought,* because the *fields* are not immediately *white to the harvest,* but with believing hope and humble patience let them recommend *the seed that they have sown* to Him, who by the secret energy of his continued influences, can give at length a sure and plentiful *increase.*

When *Jesus took to himself his great power, and reigned,* the *gospel,* which had gained so little ground under his *personal* ministration, *ran, and was* greatly *glorified* in the hands of the *apostles.* The *grain of mustard seed* shot up and branched forth into a *spreading tree,* and *birds* of every wing took shelter there. (Oh that there had been none of the *ravenous* and the *obscene kind!*) Thus when *the* Lord shall please *to hasten it in his time, a little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation.* (Isa. lx. 22.)

Let us pray that the triumphant *progress* of his *kingdom may come.* In the mean time let it be our desire that the *principles of the gospel* may, like a sacred kind of *leaven*, diffuse themselves through our whole souls; that all our powers and faculties, that all our thoughts and passions, may be, as it were, impregnated and elevated by them.

SECTION XXII.

MATT. XIII. 36, 18—23. MARK IV. 10—25. LUKE VIII. 9—18.

THEN Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house, and when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but unto them that are without all *these* things are done in parables. That seeing they might not see; and hearing they might hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them. And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? And how then will ye know all parables? Hear ye then the parable of the sower. Now the parable is this. The seed is the word of God. The sower soweth the word, and those by the way-side where the word is sown are they that hear the word of the kingdom and understand it not; but when they have heard Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. And these are they likewise which have received the seed into stony places, who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with joy; and these have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: which for a while believe; and in time of temptation, when tribulation, affliction, or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended, *and* fall away. And these are they which are sown among thorns: which, when they have heard

the word, go forth, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and pleasures of *this* life, and the lust of other things entering in, choke the word, and *it* bringeth fruit to no perfection. And these are they that received seed into the good ground; such as hear the word, and understand *it, and* receive it in an honest and good heart; and having heard the word, keep it, which also bear fruit with patience, and bring forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, and some thirty.

And he said unto them, No man when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth *it* under a bushel, *or* under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested: neither was any thing kept secret, that shall not be known, and come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed therefore what *and* how ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For whosoever hath to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.

Let us apply to ourselves *this charge* of our *blessed Redeemer*, and *take heed how we hear.* Especially let us be very careful that we *despise not him* that *now speaks to us from heaven;* and remember the *authority*, which his *exultation there* gives to the *words* which he spake in the *days of his flesh.*

Let us attentively *hear* the *parable of the sower* and its *interpretation.* Still is *Christ* by his *word* and *ministers, sowing* among us *the good seed.* Still is the great *enemy of souls* labouring to *snatch it away.* Let us endeavour to *understand*, that we may *retain* it; and to *retain*, that we may *practise* it. Still do *the cares of this world* press us; still do its *pleasures* solicit us; still do *our lusts war in our members;* and all unite their efforts to prevent our *fruitfulness in good works;* but let us remember, that with *having our fruit unto holiness, everlasting life* is connected as *the end;* and that *in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* (Rom. vi. 22, and Gal. vi. 9.)

Let us therefore be concerned that the *seed* may take *deep root,*

in our minds, that we may not rest in any superficial impression on the *passions ;* but, feeling the energy of that *living principle*, may *flourish* under the circumstances which *wither* others, and may in due time be gathered as God's *wheat into his garner.* Nor let us repine if we now *go forth weeping*, *bearing* this *precious seed*, while we have such a hope of *coming again rejoicing*, *bringing our sheaves with us.* (Psalm cxxvi. 6.)

SECTION XXIII.

Matt. xiii. 44—52.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field ; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls : Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind ; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world : the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire ; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things ? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. Then said he unto them, Therefore every Scribe *which is* instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

Luke viii. 19—21.

Then cometh to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. And it was told him by certain which said, thy mother and thy brethren

stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it.

Let us remember the *value* of the blessings the gospel proposes; and regarding *Christ* as the *pearl of great price*, and *heaven* as that immense *treasure* in which alone we can be for ever rich and happy, let us be willing to *part with all* to secure it, if we are called to such a trial.

It is not enough that we are *nominal Christians*, or possessed of the common privileges of the church: the *day* of final *separation* will come, and the *angels* employed in the work will not overlook us, but conduct us to the abodes of the *righteous* or the *wicked*. Oh that we may not then be *cast* with abhorrence *into the furnace of fire!* but now seriously realizing to ourselves this awful *day*, of which *our Lord* has given such repeated prospects, may we so *judge ourselves* that we may not then be *condemned* of him!

SECTION XXIV.

MATT. XIII. 53. MATT. VIII. 18—27. MARK IV. 35—41. LUKE VIII. 22—25.

AND it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.

And the same day, when the even was come, when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment *and* saith unto them, let us pass over unto the other side. And a certain Scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head. And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship, and there were also with him other little ships. And he said unto his disciples, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. And behold, there arose a great storm of wind and a great

tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full, and they were in jeopardy. And he was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow; and his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, carest thou not that we perish? Lord, save us, or we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? How is it that ye have no faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds, and the raging of the water, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still; and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. But the men feared exceedingly, and marvelled, and said one to another, What manner of man is this? for he commandeth even the winds and the water, and even the winds and the sea obey him.

How great and glorious does our blessed *Redeemer* appear, as having *all the elements* at his command, and exercising his dominion over *the winds and seas!* He stills the very *tempests* when they roar, and *makes the storm a calm.* (Ps. cvii. 29.) He silences at once the noise and fury of the tumultuous *waves;* and, in the midst of its confusion, says to the raging *sea, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.* (Job xxxviii. 11.) Who would not reverence and *fear him!* Who would not cheerfully *commit themselves to him!* Under such a protection, how courageously may his *church* ride through every *storm* and weather every *danger! Christ* is still with her, and she is safe even while he may seem to be *sleeping.* Blessed *Jesus!* that power of thine which here commanded the *tempests* into a *calm,* can easily silence all our tumultuous *passions,* and reduce our souls to that blessed *tranquillity* in which alone we can be capable of enjoying thee and ourselves.

May we still be applying to *Christ* with such importunate addresses; and, sensible how much we need his help, may we cry out, *Lord, save us, or we perish!* And may it be the language, not of suspicion and terror, but of *faith;* of a *faith* determined at all adventures to adhere to him, whatever dangers are to be encountered, or whatever advantages are to be resigned!

Did his compassion for us, and his desire of our salvation, engage him to submit to such *destitute* and calamitous *circumstances,* that when *the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, the Son of man* himself *had not* a place *where he might lay* that sacred *head* which with infinite mutual complacency and

delight he had so often reposed *in the bosom of the Father!* May our zeal and love animate us cheerfully to take our part in his *indigence* and *distress*, if he calls us to it! May no considerations of *ease* or *interest*, or even of human *friendship*, lead us to turn a deaf ear to the *calls of duty;* or suffer us, when we once have *engaged in his service*, to think of *deserting it*, lest on the whole we should be judged *unfit for the kingdom of God!* May thy grace, O *Lord*, animate our souls, that nothing may prevent our *faithfulness* unto death, and so deprive us of that *crown of life* which thy grace has promised to such a character! (Rev. ii. 10.)

SECTION XXV.

MATTHEW VIII. 28—34. IX. 1. MARK V. 1—21. LUKE VIII. 26—40.

AND they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes, and Gergesenes, which is over against Galilee. And when he went forth out of the ship to land, there met him, out of the city, two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. *One of them* had devils a long time. And no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces, neither could any man tame him: and he was driven of the devil into the wilderness: and he ware no clothes, neither abode in *any* house, but always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when they saw Jesus afar off, they ran, and fell down before him, and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? I beseech thee, I adjure thee by God,

that thou torment me not. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.) And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? and he answered, saying, My name is Legion, for we are many. Because many devils were entered into him. And they besought him much, that he would not send them away out of the country, *and* that he would not command them to go out into the deep. Now there was there, a good way off from them, nigh unto the mountains, a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave, and said unto them, Go. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine. And behold the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand,) and perished in the waters. And when they that fed the swine saw what was done, they fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing in the city, and in the country, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And behold the whole city came out to meet Jesus, and to see what it was that was done. And they came to Jesus, and found the man out of whom the devils were departed, and saw him *that* had the legion, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw *it* told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed, and also concerning the swine. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them, and out of their coasts; for they were taken with great fear.—And he went up into the ship. And when he was come into the ship, the man out of whom the devils were departed, besought him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and to thy friends, and tell them how great things God hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and went his way, and began to publish throughout the whole

city, and in Decapolis, how great things Jesus had done for him ; and all men did marvel.

And he entered into a ship, and passed over again unto the other side, *and* much people gathered unto him, and *gladly* received him, for they were all waiting for him, and he was nigh unto the sea.

From the remarkable story which is here before us, we must surely see the most apparent reason to adore the good providence of God, which *restrains* the malignant *spirits* of hell from spreading those *desolations* among *beasts* and *men*, which would otherwise quickly turn the *earth* into a *wilderness*, or rather into a *chaos*. But what matter of joy is it to reflect, that all their fury and rage is under a *Divine controul*, and that they cannot hurt even the meanest animal without permission from above!

The unhappy creature, whose state is here described in such lively colours, is an affecting emblem of those who are in a spiritual sense under the power of *Satan*. Thus do they *break asunder* the *bonds* of reason and gratitude, and sometimes of authority and even of shame; and, thus *driven on* by the frenzy of their lusts and passions, they are so outrageous as to *injure others* and to *wound themselves*. Human attempts to moderate and reform them may be vain; but let us remember that the Almighty Saviour has a *voice*, which can put this worst kind of *demons* to flight, and restore those that have been agitated by them to their *right mind*, so as to place them *at his feet* in holy *composure*, and in calm rational attention.

We see here *a legion of devils* trembling before the *Son of God*, confessing his superior *power*, howling as it were in their chains, and *entreating* the *delay* of their *torments*. And can human *pride* stand before him, and *rebellious mortals* triumph over him? Happy souls, that are *listed under his banners!* They shall share the *victories* of the great *Captain of their salvation*, and *the God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet shortly*. (Rom. xvi. 20.)

But oh, how stupid and how wretched were these *Gadarenes* who preferred their *swine* to their *souls*, and *besought him to depart out of their coasts*, whose presence was their *defence* and their *glory!* May Divine grace preserve us from a temper like theirs! And may those of us, who have ourselves experienced the restoring power of *Christ* and his *gospel*, be engaged to *adhere* to our great *Benefactor* and gratefully to *devote those powers* to his service, which he has rescued from dishonour, mischief, and ruin.

SECTION XXVI.

Matt. ix. 17.

And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; but go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

Compassionate Redeemer! thou didst, as the great *Physician of souls*, willingly converse with objects that must have been most hateful to thy pure and holy nature! May we, each of us, have a due sense of the *malignity of sin*, that fatal *disease of the soul*, that we may with a becoming temper apply to *Christ* for a *cure!* May we also, like him, be willing to condescend to the *meanest* and *vilest*, if it may be the means of winning them over to true religion and happiness! ever preferring *mercy* to *sacrifice*, and choosing rather to govern ourselves by the dictates of a benevolent heart than by the maxims of proud and censorious men.

Christ would not discourage his *disciples* by *over-rigorous institutions:* and it is unfit that his religion should be burdened with them. He suits the duties of his people to their circum-

stances, and kindly proportions their work to their strength, with a tender regard to their weakness, till by degrees they may be fitted for the more difficult and humbling services.

SECTION XXVII.

MATT. IX. 18—34. MARK V. 22—43. LUKE VIII. 41—56.

WHILE he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was one of the rulers of the synagogue, and when he saw him, he fell down at Jesus' feet and worshipped him, and besought him greatly that he would come into his house, for he had one only daughter about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. And *he* besought him, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death, *I pray thee* come and lay thy hands upon her, that she may be healed, and she shall live. And Jesus arose and followed him, and *so did* his disciples. But as he went, much people followed him, and thronged him. And, behold, a certain woman which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind him, and touched the border of his garment. For she said within herself, if I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said unto him, Master, thou seest the multitude throng thee and press *thee*, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, and fell down before him, and told him all the truth; *and* declared unto him before all the people, for what case she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And when he saw her, he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's *house certain* which said to him, Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further? But as soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he answered and said unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe, and she shall be made whole. And when he came into the house of the ruler of the synagogue, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James, and the father and the mother of the maiden. And when he saw the minstrels, and the tumult, and the people making a noise, and them that wept and wailed greatly, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? Give place, and weep not, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi, which is, being interpreted, Damsel, (I say unto thee) arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway, and walked: and he commanded that something should be given her to eat. And her parents were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly, that they should tell no man what was done. And the fame thereof went abroad into all that land.

MATTHEW IX. 27—34.

AND when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, *Thou* Son of David have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house the blind men came to him; and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened, and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See *that* no man know *it*. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.

And as they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake. And the multitude marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the prince of the devils.

We have here a scene of complicated wonders, worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance. Any *single story* of this kind might justly move our *admiration;* but when we are reading the *life of Christ*, such a *constellation of miracles* rises, that the number renders us less sensible of the lustre and glory of each.

We may observe in the story of the *distempered woman* a mixture of *weakness* and of *faith*. She could not reasonably think to *steal a cure*, without the knowledge of him by whom it was wrought; or imagine a *charm* in the *garment* that *Christ* wore, which could produce so glorious an effect, independent of his agency and will. Yet she acted as if she had thought thus; and a compassionate *Redeemer* commended her *faith*, and excused her *infirmity*. Such candour should we exercise towards those in whom we find any thing truly valuable; *not despising the day of small things*, but ready to encourage and support the weak, and to commend whatever good we may discover in them.

We have already beheld *Christ* frequently giving *sight to the blind*, and *casting out evil spirits;* but we have here a *second instance* of his *power over death*, and behold one under its dominion *hearing the voice of the Son of God!* In how majestic, and yet in how gentle a manner, does he address himself to this admirable work! *Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise.* And immediately she

heard and *obeyed.* Thus shall he, with equal ease, *call forth myriads of his saints*, who now seem *perished in the dust:* and it may be said with regard to them also, in reference to that day, *They are not dead, but sleep.* The *maiden*, of whom we here read, *arose* only to a *dying life;* a life which needed the support of *food*, and was in no respect more noble or more secure than that of other mortals; but we look for a *better resurrection*, in which all the infirmities of the body shall be left behind in the grave; and *there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying.* (Rev. xxi. 4.)

In expectation of this, let us restrain *immoderate sorrow* when our pious friends are taken away: let us not make *too much ado* on the occasion, nor allow ourselves to be thrown into *a tumult of* passion, even when *our children* are stretched on the *bed of death;* but *believing in Christ*, and governing ourselves by his precepts and maxims, let us in humble *resignation*, and submissive, though mournful *silence*, wait the issues of his providence and grace; since he knows how, as in *this instance*, to over-rule the calamities of our families to the good of our souls, and even to strengthen our *faith* by those exercises, which might seem most likely to overthrow it.

SECTION XXVIII.

Matt. xiii. 54—58, ix. 35—38. Mark vi. 1—6.

And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath-day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing *him* were astonished, and said, From whence hath this *man* these things? and what wisdom *is* this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all here with us? Whence then hath this *man* all these things? And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could do there no mighty works because of their unbe-

lief, save that he laid his hands on a few sick folk, and healed *them*. And he marvelled because of their unbelief.

And he went round about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness, and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Since the blessed *Jesus* vouchsafed to *renew his visit* to *Nazareth*, where they had attempted to murder him on his first preaching among them, let us *not be weary of well-doing*, nor refuse to *renew our attempts* on the most obstinate sinners, where the interests of their immortal souls are concerned.

But though they were *astonished* at *his wisdom*, and could not but allow *the mighty works* that he had wrought; yet these ungrateful creatures went on to reject him, and in so doing were *condemned out of their own mouth:* nor can we be at any loss for instances of those who in later ages have fallen under the *like condemnation.*

He is spoken of as *the carpenter;* which intimates that he once wrought at that mean employment. What amazing condescension was this in the *Son of God*, and the *Heir of all things, by whom also the worlds were made!* (Heb. i. 2.) Yet surely while the *hands of Christ* were employed in these daily labours, *his soul* was rising in holy contemplations and devout affections. So may we intermingle *pious meditations* with our *secular cares*, and have *our conversation in heaven*, while our *dwelling* is *on earth!*

How much did these *Nazarenes* lose by their obstinate prejudices against *Jesus!* How many *diseased bodies* might have been cured, how many *lost souls* might have been recovered and saved, had they given him a better reception! May Divine Grace deliver us from that *unbelief*, which does as it were *disarm Christ himself*, and render him a *savour of death*, rather than *of life* to our souls!

Still he continued his gracious labours, and, when *rejected in one city*, went and *preached in another;* still surrounded with a *crowd* of admirers, whom he viewed with *tender regard.* Let

his *ministers* learn of him, tenderly to *pity* those, who are *faint and exposed* to danger, and are *as sheep having no shepherd*. The extreme *necessities* of his *churches* in many places are but too apparent: let us earnestly *pray*, that *God* would behold them with *compassion;* that he would graciously provide for their instruction, and would *thrust forth* such *labourers* among them as may be diligent and faithful in their work, and prove the happy instruments of *gathering in fruit to everlasting life*. (John iv. 36.)

SECTION XXIX.

MATT. x. 1—15. MARK vi. 7—11. LUKE ix. 1—5.

AND when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

These twelve, Jesus called *unto him*, and began to send them forth by two and two, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver, nor brass in your purses, *and* take nothing for your journey, save a staff only: No scrip, no bread, neither shoes, neither have two coats apiece. For the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy: and there abide till you go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it; and if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the very dust from under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily, I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

What abundant reason is there for humble thankfulness that the *ambassadors of Christ* were thus *sent forth to preach the gospel*, and that at length their *number* was increased, and their *commission* enlarged; so that instead of their being thus confined to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, *their* instructive *line is gone out through all the earth*, *and their words* have resounded even *to the end of the world!* (Psalm xix. 4.) May the purport of their message be seriously attended to! since it will so certainly be *a savour of life* or *of death*, of eternal *salvation* or aggravated *condemnation* and ruin.

Let us tremble to think, that *it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment* than for *those* by whom the *gospel is rejected:* and let us earnestly pray that Divine Grace may enable us to *receive it in the love of it*, and to obey *the truth*, *that we may be saved.* (2 Thess. ii. 10.)

They who have the honour in this respect to succeed the *apostles* as *ministers* of this *gospel* may learn most useful instructions from this discourse of our *Divine Master.* Let them speak and act as the *messengers of peace* and the friends of mankind, who cordially wish well to all around them; and gratefully acknowledge the kindness which, as faithful *labourers*, they have justly *deserved.* Let them shew a true greatness of mind in an apparent superiority to *temporal interests* and present gratifications; *easy* in whatever accommodations they find where *Providence* leads them; and forgetting themselves, to remember their *Master*, and the *souls* he has committed to their care.

Let them faithfully *warn* all around them of the importance of their *eternal concerns*, and of the unutterable danger of *receiving the grace of God in vain*, that *whether men will hear or forbear*, they may be *clean from their blood.* And, while we preserve such a temper and conduct, we may cheerfully hope that *God will be with us* in the way that we go, and how *precarious* soever our *circumstances* may seem, will give us *food to eat, and raiment to put on.* May we all have *this token for good*, that God will take care of *our interests;* even the *consciousness* of our being faithfully engaged to promote his glory, and our joyful *readiness* to *spend and be spent* for the service of souls! (2 Cor. xii. 15.)

SECTION XXX.

Matthew x. 16—31.

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver

you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against *their* parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

The disciple is not above *his* master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord: if they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household? Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, *that* speak ye in light, and what ye hear in the ear, *that* preach ye upon the house-tops. And fear not them which will kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.

How apparently fit is it, that this eternal and almighty *God* should be the object of our humble *fear*, and that in comparison with him we should *fear nothing else!* All the *terrors* of the world are disarmed by this; and by this are its *flatteries* also disarmed. In whatever stations of life we are fixed, let this

engage us to be faithful to God in them: so shall we be most truly faithful to ourselves!

The *apostles* were exposed to peculiar *dangers* and *trials;* but *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus* must expect some degree of *persecution*, (2 Tim. iii. 12,) let us therefore *arm ourselves with the same mind*, that we may bear it with a truly Christian fortitude. May Divine grace teach us to mingle the *wisdom of the serpent* with the *innocence of the dove*, and to shelter ourselves from the ill usage of a perverse and sinful generation, so far only as we can do it without offering any violation to our consciences!

It is indeed matter of great lamentation, that the sentiments of *benevolence* and *goodness* which seem so natural to the human mind, and are always so ornamental and delightful, should prevail no more: and it is shameful that the *name of religion*, so well calculated to cultivate *these sentiments*, should be made use of as an engine to destroy them; and instead of cementing *kingdoms* and *families* in closer and more affectionate bonds, should inspire them even with mortal animosity. Let us bless God for our public liberties; and earnestly pray, that where *persecution* reigns in its utmost terror, *the wrath of man* may *praise him*, and *the remainder of* that *wrath* be *restrained!* (Psalm lxxvi. 10.)

The *ill usage* which the blessed *Jesus* endured from an ungrateful world, may surely prevent our being surprised or offended, if we meet with some share of it too. May we be willing to *suffer with him*, that we may at length *reign with him!* (2 Tim. ii. 12.) And if by unexpected revolutions in providence we should be called out to the severest trials, may *the spirit of glory and of God rest upon us!* and may we *not account* even *our lives dear unto us*, that approving our fidelity to him, we may *finish our course with joy!* (1 Pet. iv. 14, and Acts xx. 24.)

SECTION XXXI.

MATT. x. 32; xi. 1. MARK vi. 12, 13. LUKE ix. 6.

WHOSOEVER therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For

I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes *shall be* they of his own househould. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it. He that receiveth you, receiveth me: and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

MATT. XI. 1. MARK VI. 12, 13. LUKE IX. 6.

And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and preach in their cities. And they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed every where.

Justly may the blessed *Jesus* set so high a value on himself, and on the blessings of his grace: justly may he insist upon our readiness to *abandon all for him*, who is so just an equivalent for all. May his grace teach us to *love him more* than the dearest of our *relations*, and even to be ready *for his sake* to sacrifice our *lives!* May it make us willing to *take up* and bear *any cross* for him, who *bore his cross* and expired upon it for us!

The *gospel* has indeed been the occasion of much *contention* and *persecution*, not only in *Judea* but elsewhere: yet let us not charge it upon any malignity, or any deficiency in that, but

on the lusts and corruptions of men, who have either directly opposed or grossly perverted it. Let us endeavour to arm ourselves with *courage* to encounter, and resolution to endure, whatever *persecutions* or *injuries* our adherence to it may cost us; ever confiding in that gracious *Providence* which extends itself even to the *meanest creatures:* reposing ourselves on the *support* of *Divine consolations*, and esteeming ourselves happy, even in *losing our lives* in this world, if we may *find them* in that which is everlasting.

In the mean time, may this excellent *discourse* of our blessed *Redeemer* animate us to every *work of faith*, and every *labour of love!* Let not the *poorest* be discouraged from some charitable attempt for the good of others: since the munificence of our heavenly Master will remember *even a cup of cold water* given to *the least of his servants* under that character. Yet since there will be such a *variety of rewards* proportionable to different degrees of liberality and zeal, let us indulge a generous ambition of *abounding in the work of the Lord*, that we may shine with distinguished glory in the day of retribution, and have *an abundant entrance into his kingdom.*

SECTION XXXII.

MATT. XIV. 1—12. MARK VI. 14—29. LUKE IX. 7—9.

AT that time king Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and of all that was done by him, (for his name was spread abroad:) and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him; and of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that it is a prophet, or one of the prophets. And Herod said unto his servants, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him: and he desired to see him.

For Herod himself had sent forth, and laid hold upon John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful

for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him, but she could not. For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birth-day made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief *estates* of Galilee, and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give *it* thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give *it* thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me here by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; *yet* for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him at meat, he would not reject her, *but* commanded *it* to be given *her*. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went, and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel brought *it and* gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard *of it*, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb: and went and told Jesus.

How dreadful a thing is it to have a guilty and accusing conscience! and how remarkable was the force of it in the instance before us! *Herod* was a *king*, yet it addressed him in language of terror, and made itself heard and felt amidst all the hurries and flatteries of a court. Vain was the power of a *prince;* vain the caresses of a favourite *mistress*, basely gratified with the blood of a prophet; and vain the yet more boasting *tenets* of a

Sadducee. In one instance at least a *resurrection* shall be *believed;* and if a *prophet* arise in *Israel*, *Herod* shall be among the first to say, *It is John the Baptist, risen from the dead;* and shall be ready to forbode the sad effects of his recovered life, and to prognosticate evil to himself from the *mighty works* he performed. Let us make it our care to preserve *a conscience void of offence*, that instead of a continual *torment*, it may be to us a *continual feast!*

And if we really desire to preserve it, let us take heed that we be not excessively *transported* with the *entertainments* of life, or rashly *enter* into *engagements* which perhaps may plunge us into some degree of guilt, whether they be performed or violated.

We see, in this dreadful instance of *Herodias*, what an implacable degree of *malice* may arise in the hearts of sinners on being *reproved* for the most scandalous and mischievous vices. Instead of owning the *obligation* to one that would have plucked her *as a brand out of the burning*, she *thirsts* insatiably for his *blood:* and chooses rather to indulge her cruelty and revenge in *taking away his life*, than to gratify her avarice and ambition in *demanding a gift* that might have been equal *to the half of a kingdom.*

But how *mysterious* was that *providence*, which left the *life* of so *holy a man* in such infamous hands, and permitted it to be sacrificed to the malice of an abandoned *harlot*, to the petulancy of a *vain girl*, and to the rashness of a foolish and perhaps an intoxicated *prince*, who made the *prophet's head* the *reward of a dance! The ways of God are unsearchable!* but we are sure he can never be at a loss to *repay* his servants in another world for the greatest *sufferings* they endure in this, and even for *life itself*, when given up in his cause.

We may reasonably conclude, that *death* could never be an *unseasonable surprise* to this *excellent saint.* When the *executioner came into the prison* by night, perhaps breaking in upon his slumbers, and executed his *bloody commission* almost as soon as he declared it, a soul like his might *welcome the stroke*, as the means of liberty and glory; assured that the transient *agony of a moment* would transmit it to a *kingdom* where *the least* of its inhabitants would be in holiness, honour, and felicity, *superior to John* in his most prosperous and successful state on earth.

His enemies might for a while insult over him, while *his disciples* were mingling their tears with his dust, and lamenting the residue of *his days cut off in the midst.* His *death* was *precious in the sight of the Lord*, and *the triumphing of the wicked* was *short.* So will he ere long *plead the cause* of all his injured people, and give *a cup of trembling and astonishment* to those

that have made themselves *drunk with their blood.* Let *cruelty* and *tyranny* do their worst, *verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.* (Psalm lviii. 11.)

SECTION XXXIII.

MATTHEW XIV. 13—23. MARK VI. 30—46. LUKE IX. 10—17. JOHN VI. 1—15.

THE apostles, when they were returned, gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.

And when Jesus heard *of it,* [*that Herod had heard of his fame,*] he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And he took them, and departed thence by ship, and went over the sea of Galilee, *which is the sea* of Tiberias, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went forth [*out of the ship*] up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.—And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, and he received them; and began to teach them many things, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.

And when the day was now far spent, his disciples, the twelve, came to him, saying, This is a desert, and the time is now far past, send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and buy themselves victuals; for they have

nothing to eat. But Jesus answered, and said unto them, They need not depart, give ye them to eat. *And* he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? (And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.) Philip answered him, Two hundred penny-worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. And *his disciples* said unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred penny-worth of bread, and give them to eat? He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, one of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many? He said, Bring them hither to me. Now there was much grass in the place. And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies on the green grass. And they did so, and made them all sit down. And they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties in a company. Then he took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake the loaves, and gave *them* to his disciples to set before the multitude; and the two fishes he divided among them all, as much as they would, And they did all eat, and were all filled. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered *them* together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, and of the fishes, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

And straightway Jesus constained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, and perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make

him a king, he departed again and went himself alone up into a mountain apart to pray.

So evidently true is it that *man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God!* (Matt. iv. 4.) How wonderful did the *power of Christ* appear in thus *multiplying the food!* and how amiable his *compassion*, in his affectionate *concern for the relief* of his necessitous followers! It is to be esteemed a great happiness when the *ministers of the gospel* have it in their *power* to assist men in their *temporal* as well as *spiritual necessities;* and it is peculiarly incumbent upon *them* thus *to do good and communicate: for with such sacrifices* from their hands *God is* peculiarly *well pleased*, and the *success* of their *ministry* may be greatly promoted by them. (Heb. xiii. 16.)

The *disciples received* from the *hand of Christ* the *food* they *delivered to the people:* and so should *ministers* be concerned that they may *receive from Christ*, what they *dispense to others*, as the *bread of life*, and that *they* also at the same time may *live* upon it, as the *support* of their *own souls.* How great an honour is it to be employed as *stewards of the mysteries of God!* Let not immoderate *secular cares*, let not the desire of *worldly riches* or *greatness* interrupt us in this blessed work! *Christ withdrew* from those who would have *made him king:* ill therefore does it become *his disciples* to pursue *earthly grandeur;* and most unworthy is it of *his ministers* to act as if *his kingdom* were *of this world.* May we *learn in every state to be content.* (Phil. iv. 11.) In *want* may we cheerfully *trust Providence!* In *plenty*, may we not wantonly *abuse it!* but learn, by his command of *gathering up the fragments* even of his *miraculous feast*, a wise *frugality* in the use of our enjoyments; *that nothing may be lost*, nor a *reserve* be wanting, by which the streams of *future liberality* may be fed.

When the day had been thus employed, *Christ retired to a mountain to pray.* Thus must *secret devotion* attend our *public labours* for the instruction and salvation of men, if we would secure that *Divine blessing*, without which, neither the most eloquent preaching, nor the most engaging and benevolent conduct, can command or promise success.

SECTION XXXIV.

MATTHEW XIV. 24—36. MARK VI. 47—56. JOHN VI. 16—21.

AND when the evening was *now* come, his disciples went down unto the sea, and entered into a ship, and went over the sea towards Capernaum : and it was now dark, and the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land, and was not come to them : and the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. And he saw them toiling in rowing : for the wind was contrary unto them, and the ship was tossed with waves. And about the fourth watch of the night Jesus cometh unto them, when they had rowed about five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship, they supposed it to have been a spirit ; and cried out for fear. (For they all saw him and were troubled.) And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer : it is I ; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid : and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth *his* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? Then they willingly received him into the ship. And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased, and immediately the ship was at the land, whither they went. Then they that were in the ship were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered ; for they considered not *the miracle* of the loaves, for their heart was hardened. *And* they came and worshipped him,

saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret; and drew to the shore. And when they were come out of the ship, the men of that place had straightway knowledge of him, *and* they sent out into all the country round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was, and brought unto him all that were diseased.

And whithersoever he entered into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made perfectly whole.

Thus it still pleases *Christ* to exercise the *faith* of his people, that he may strengthen their dependance on him, and demonstrate at once his compassion and his power. Thus are *storms* permitted oftentimes to rise around them, and for a while they are *left in darkness*, and are *tossed with tempests:* but he is *near* at hand, even when they think him at the remotest distance; and when he seems to be *passing by them*, as regardless of their danger and distress, he has designs of grace and mercy to them, and acts in such a way on purpose to quicken and excite them to a greater earnestness and fervour in their application to him. Happy would the *Christian* be, could he always *discern his Lord* and always conceive of him *aright!* but alas, how often does he appear to the disordered mind as the object of *terror* rather than of *confidence!* and, in a day of *darkness*, while he may seem to treat his suffering people with neglect, instead of seeking him with a more earnest importunity, how ready are they to be overwhelmed with *fears*, and to conclude *he has forgotten them!*

At the *command* of *Jesus*, *Peter* ventured to *go to him on the sea.* And through what storms and dangers may we not safely venture, if we are sure that *our Lord calls us!* Yet the *rebuke* which he suffered, may warn us not rashly to throw ourselves on *unnecessary trials*, lest our excess of *confidence* end in *fear* and *disgrace.* Modesty and caution will adorn our other virtues, and render us amiable in the eyes of the humble *Jesus.*

In how many circumstances of life does the *Christian* appear to his own imagination like *Peter beginning to sink* in the waves! But in the time of our distress, like him, let us *cry to Jesus for help;* and, while we are lifting up the hands of *faith* and *prayer* we may humbly hope that *Christ* will *stretch forth his* omnipo-

tent *arm* for our rescue. Let every experience of this kind, and all the sensible aid he is from time to time imparting to us, establish our *dependance* on him, and enforce our *obedience* to him, as the *Son of God*. May Divine Grace deliver us from that *hardness of heart*, that stupidity and insensibility of mind which sometimes remains *unconvinced* in the midst of evidence, and *unaffected* under the most moving illustrations of his *abilities* and *willingness* to help us!

SECTION XXXV.

John vi. 22—40.

The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but *that* his disciples were gone away alone: (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed, Then they said unto him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our Fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said

unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven: but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

How gratefully should we acknowledge the Divine goodness in giving *this true bread from heaven for the life of the world;* and how solicitous should we be, that by a true *faith* we may *feed upon it!* In the midst of so many ensnaring circumstances, let us be strictly watchful over ourselves, that the vigour of our pursuits and *labours* may not be laid out on the *meat which perishes*, to the forgetfulness of *that which endures to eternal life;* but acknowledging those authentic *seals*, by which *Christ* is marked out to that important trust, may we apply to him as *sent of God the Father* to be the Author of eternal salvation, and come to him to be partakers of his saving benefits!

It must surely grieve us to observe the neglect and contempt with which he is too frequently treated; but it may comfort us that there yet remains *a remnant according to the election of grace*, (Rom. xi. 5.) *All that the Father giveth him, will come to him;* and blessed be God, that this appears to be no inconsiderable number. *Secret things belong to the Lord our God*, (Deut. xxix. 29.) let it therefore be our care to *make* first *our calling*, and then by a happy consequence, *our election sure*, (2 Pet. i. 10.) Whatever discouragements may arise in our way, may we fly to cast ourselves at the foot of *Christ;* and then we may be sure that he will never on any consideration *cast us out*, but will re-

ceive us in the arms of his almighty compassion, and having sheltered and maintained us in his house on earth, will at length conduct us safely to the presence of his glory and to the blessed abodes of complete felicity.

SECTION XXXVI.

John vi. 41—58.

The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

The Jews therefore strove amongst themselves, saying, How can this man give us *his* flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me,

and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so, he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.

The *hearers* of *Christ murmured*, and perversely objected *against his doctrine*. Let not *ministers* now wonder, if the like capricious humour sometimes prompts *their hearers* to seek occasion of *offence* where there is none. Let them learn of their great *Master*, *in meekness* to *instruct those that oppose themselves*, *if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;* (2 Tim. ii. 25.) *Our Lord* expressly asserts the necessity of being *taught* and *drawn by the Father*, in order to our knowing him, and *coming to him*. Let us therefore humbly seek these influences *ourselves*, and fix our dependance upon them in all our attempts upon *others*, for their conversion and edification.

Christ here gives us *line upon line*, and *precept upon precept*, to illustrate and enforce this important doctrine of the necessity of regarding him as the *bread of life*, and of feeding by faith on his *flesh and blood*, which he has *given for the life of the world*. Let us, as we desire any part in his saving blessings, most thankfully receive *his flesh* as *meat indeed*, and *his blood* as *drink indeed*. May God be merciful to those that call themselves *Christians*, and yet are strangers to such a believing intercourse with *Christ*, and to the derivation of *spiritual life* from him! If this be *enthusiasm*, it is the enthusiasm of *scripture;* and the denial or forgetfulness of these important doctrines is like a fatal *palsy* to the soul which chills as it were, all its nerves, and destroys at once its sensibility and vigour, its pleasure and usefulness.

To represent and inculcate these great truths, our *Lord* afterward instituted the *sacrament of his supper*, in which we not only commemorate his sufferings, but our own concern in them. It is the language of every intelligent approach to it, that we acknowledge *the life of our souls* to depend on the *merit of his atonement*, and the *communications of his grace*. This is *eating his flesh*, and *drinking his blood:* may we be nourished by it to *eternal life!* Then though this mortal part of our nature drop into the dust, our *souls will live* and triumph; nor shall our *bodies* finally perish, but be *raised up by Christ* in the great day, to take their part in the full *joy of our Lord*. There these *intermediate ordinances* shall cease, and copious uninterrupted streams of Divine *teachings* and Divine *influences*, shall sweetly flow in upon our ever improving, active, rejoicing minds.

SECTION XXXVII.

John vi. 59—71.

These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard *this*, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it! When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? *What*, and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit and *they* are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.—And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot *the son* of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

We have, through the Divine goodness, been made acquainted with those *gospel-truths*, in their full evidence, and mutual connexion, which were more obscurely hinted to those who attended on *Christ's* personal ministry: may we therefore hearken to the *spiritual sense* of this sublime and excellent discourse! And as the credible account of his *ascension into glory* is now added to the rest, let us receive the whole of his doctrine with the most humble submission: earnestly entreating the influences of Divine grace, that we may not only be *drawn to Christ*, but be so *firmly attached* to his interest, that whoever

else *forsake him*, we may *never go away*. On the contrary, may we rather collect an argument from their ingratitude and folly, more strenuously and more affectionately to *adhere* to him; indeed *to whom should we go*, but to him? *He has the words of eternal life*. From him therefore, in all lowly subjection of soul, may we learn those lessons on which our everlasting happiness depends!

May we never, like *Judas*, conceal a treacherous and disaffected heart, under the specious appearance of piety and goodness! This would be only imposing on ourselves; for his penetrating eye can never be *deceived*. May we approve the integrity of our souls in his sight, and repose an unlimited confidence in him, as one whom *we believe and know* to be a Divine Saviour, *Christ the son of the living God!*

PART IV.

MATTHEW XV. XXVII. MARK VII. XV. LUKE IX. 18. XXIII. JOHN VII. XIX.

CONTAINING THE PERIOD OF TWELVE MONTHS, FROM THE END OF THE SECOND YEAR'S PREACHING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, IN THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR TWENTY NINE, TO THE END OF THE THIRD YEAR IN THE BEGINNING OF THIRTY.

SECTION I.

MATT. XV. 1—19. MARK VII. 1—13.

THEN came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash *their* hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And *when they come* from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, and of brazen vessels, and tables. Then the Pharisees and Scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to, but transgress, the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For, laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For God commanded *by* Moses, saying, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, *It is* Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, *he shall be free.* And ye suffer him no more to honour, or to do aught for his

father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect by your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. Ye hypocrites, well hath Esaias prophesied of you, as it is written, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit, in vain do they worship me teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

How miserable is the case of those who, while they earnestly contend for the *forms of Divine worship*, are losing both the improvement and reward, which might be expected from a regular attendance upon it! This is the case of all, who *draw near to God with their lips*, while *their hearts are far from him.* May we abhor the vanity of such hypocritical behaviour in the presence of Him, who *searches the heart and tries the reins of the children of men.*

Let us learn from this just and severe sentence which *our Lord* passes on these superstitious *Pharisees*, to avoid the temper he condemns in them. It much less becomes us as *Christians*, and especially as *protestants* to *impose* on our brethren with rigorous severity those *doctrinal decisions*, or those *ritual observances*, which have not their express foundation in the *word of God*, to which we so constantly appeal as to our common rule. Happy had it been for the church in all ages and nations, had men exerted that zeal for the *truths* and the *institutions* of God in the beauty and glory of their native simplicity, which has carried them on to defend and propagate their *own inventions*, till religion itself has almost sunk under the weight of the ornaments in which they have dressed it, and the unwieldy armour which they have hung about it!

Let *children* learn from the *command* which *Christ* has vindicated, to *honour their parents* by a tender care of them in their declining days; remembering, that as no filial duty and gratitude can ever fully repay our obligations to such friends, so an affectionate regard to them is a proper and necessary expression of our filial piety to the great *Father of our spirits.* Justly may he esteem his *temples profaned*, rather than *adorned*, by the most costly *gifts*, which are the *spoils of nature*, and the *trophies of inhumanity.*

SECTION II.

Matt. xv. 10—20. Mark vii. 14—23.

And when he had called all the people, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one *of you*, and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him. Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but the things which come out of him: that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was entered into the house from the people, then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said unto them, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth at the mouth into the man, it cannot defile him, because it entereth not into his heart, but goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught, purging all meats? And he said, But that which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man: for those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, false witness, blasphemies, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and these are the things that defile the man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

May we be all *taught of God* to maintain a constant *watch* over our own *hearts*, as remembering that *from thence are the issues*

of life, and from thence the sources of *sin and death!* (Prov. iv. 23.) All the *secret motions* and sentiments of them are *open* to the Divine examination and inspection. There then may we begin our cares, to *purify ourselves from all filthiness* both *of the flesh and spirit*, as ever we would *perfect holiness in the fear of God*. (2 Cor. vii. 1.)

We see, what secret *abominations our Lord* has here discovered and marked out. It is a matter of much lamentation, that our *corrupted nature* abounds with such poisonous productions: let us earnestly pray, that they may be rooted out by *Divine grace*, lest we ourselves be *rooted out of God's vineyard*, as at once encumbering and deforming it!

May the blessed Spirit of God *create in us a clean heart*, and implant in our souls a temper opposite to all these *enormities!* May candour and purity, integrity and tenderness, piety and generosity, humility and wisdom, prevail in our hearts and shine in our conduct! And, in a word, *whatsoever things are true and honest, just and pure, lovely and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise*, let us *think on these things*, and practise them! (Phil. iv. 8.)

Let those, who are employed to *guide others*, be especially solicitous to *know* and pursue the *right way* themselves; lest, instead of *saving themselves, and those that hear them*, they both of them at last perish together. We are in danger of it, if, like these *Pharisees*, we inculcate on our *hearers* a zeal for the *circumstantials* and appendages of *religion*, while its *essentials* are neglected; and perhaps some of the greatest *enormities of the mind* are consecrated under an honourable name, and profanely *listed under the banner* of the God of holiness and love.

SECTION III.

Matthew xv. 21—28. Mark vii. 24—30.

Then Jesus arose and went thence, and departed into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into a house, and would have no man know *it;* but he could not be hid. For behold, a certain woman of Canaan, (the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation;) whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, *and* came out of the same coasts, and fell at his feet, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* son of David; my daughter is grievously

vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But Jesus answered and said unto her, Let the children first be filled; for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, truth, Lord, yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs which fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great *is* thy faith: for this saying be it unto thee even as thou wilt. Go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

If there be any thing in the whole history of *our Lord*, which might have a tendency to discourage and terrify the humble penitent, it would surely be *his treatment* of this poor *Canaanitish woman*, when she made so humble and so affectionate an application to him; first *keeping silence;* then intimating in words a *coldness*, not to say *an aversion;* and at last representing her but *as a dog* in comparison of the *Jews*. Surely such an answer had almost broken her heart, had it not been secretly supported by *his grace*, while *his conduct* seemed *so unkind*. Happy are they that, like her (who, though a *Gentile*, did in this instance approve herself a true *daughter of Abraham*,) can *against hope believe in hope!* (Rom. iv. 18.) Happy they, who can thus extract *arguments* even *from discouragement!* They will finally conquer and triumph, as this pious *woman* did; and the honours of their *faith* will be commemorated even by *Christ* himself, who soon indulges the overflowing tenderness of his heart in the *applause* he bestows upon her, and the ample *grant* he makes her of all she asked in its utmost extent.

SECTION IV.

MATT. xv. 29—39. MARK vii. 31—37. viii. 1—10.

AND Jesus again departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, came nigh unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue: And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published *it;* and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

And he went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them *those that were* lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them; insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting to their own houses, lest they faint in the way: for divers of them came from far. And his disciples answered, and say unto him, From whence should we have so much bread here in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus saith unto them, How

many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake *them*, and gave to his disciples to set before *them;* and they did set *them* before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before *them:* And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.—And he sent away the multitude. And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the coasts of Magdala and Dalmanutha.

The story of the *deaf man*, whose *ears were opened* and *his tongue loosed*, is one additional instance, among many more, of *Christ's humility*, as well as of his *power*. He *retired* from the admiring *multitude;* he *used means* when he could easily have wrought without them; he solemnly *addressed* his *heavenly Father*, virtually acknowledging, while he *looked up to heaven*, that, as man, he *derived* his miraculous power *from above;* and he was so far superior to the sentiments of *vanity*, that he *commanded men to conceal* the most glorious and benevolent actions. May all his followers, and especially his ministers, *learn of him* who was thus *meek and lowly!* (Matt. xi. 29,) neither acting as in *their own strength*, when they attempt a *spiritual cure;* nor proclaiming *their own praises*, when they have effected it. Then will they likewise *do all things well*; and there will be *that beauty* in the manner, which no wise man would entirely neglect, even in *those actions*, which are in themselves most excellent and great.

With what a circle is our blessed *Lord* surrounded! Let us pause a little, and endeavour to paint him to our imagination *on this mountain*, where the *astonished multitudes* so justly extolled all these mingled *wonders* of *power* and of *grace*. Let us reflect on the *dumb speaking*, the *maimed made whole*, the *lame walking*, the *deaf hearing*, and the *blind seeing*, that with them *we may glorify the God of Israel.*

But who can describe the sentiments of these happy creatures, who, without any dangerous or painful operation, found themselves, in a moment, restored beyond all the efforts of nature, and beyond all the prospects of hope! With what pleasure did the *ear*, which had just been opened, listen to the pleasing accents of his instructive tongue! How did the *lame* leap around him for

joy! and the *maimed* extend their recovered hands in grateful acknowledgments of his new creating power! While the voice of the *dumb* sang forth his praises in sounds before unknown; and the eye of the *blind* checked the curiosity, which would have prompted it to range over the various and beautiful objects of unveiled nature, to fix its rapturous regards on the gracious countenance of him that had given it the day!

Let us further reflect with what correspondent pleasure must our *Lord* survey these grateful and astonished creatures, while his benevolent heart took its share in all the *delight* which he gave! *These trophies of his greatness*, how unlike to *those of the field*, the monuments of desolation and slaughter!—*trophies*, for which the *hero* must have struggled with the *man*, and might sit down and weep over his own success!

Whose heart is so insensible as not to feel a *humane* as well as *devout pleasure* in the history of these and the like *miracles*, though the subjects on which they are wrought, are long since mouldering in the dust! But let us further recollect, that our *Divine Leader* has other yet more noble and more permanent *trophies*; those immortal *spirits* which he has *redeemed*, and *sanctified*, and *saved*. So may our transported souls, *O blessed Jesus*, in the consciousness of *health*, *vigour*, and *salvation*, behold thee as *our Deliverer!* So mayst *thou* view us with *satisfaction*, as *the travail of thy soul*, in that *mountain of God*, where we hope to offer thee nobler praises, and for ever to consecrate to thy service *those powers*, which thou hast recovered from *weakness*, *dishonour*, and *ruin*.

SECTION V.

Matthew xvi. 1—12. Mark viii. 11—21.

The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came forth, and began to question with him, tempting, and desired that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, *It will be* fair weather: for the sky is red; and in the morning, *it will be* foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not *discern* the signs of the times? And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this wicked and adulterous generation seek after a sign?

Verily, I say unto you, There shall no sign be given to this generation, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.—Then Jesus charged them, saying, Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the Sadducees, and *of* the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, *It is* because we have taken no bread. *Which* when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand? Have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? And having ears, hear ye not? And do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand that I spake *it* not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Saducees? Then understood they how that he bade *them* not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

So evident is it, that the circumstances of a *scripture story* may be *remembered*, where the design of it is *overlooked* or forgotten! It is much to be wished, that those which we have been surveying, may not increase the number of such instances.

In all those cases, wherein the *arm of the Lord* has been *made bare* in our favour, let us seriously reflect on the *Divine power* and *goodness*, and learn from past experience to trust it for the time to come. Never let us fall into the perverse suspicions of the *Israelites; can God furnish a table in the wilderness?* (Ps. lxxviii. 19.) But let us *be strong in the faith, giving glory to God*, and cheerfully repose ourselves on his care, who can never

want *wisdom* to judge aright of the necessities of his people, or *power* to relieve them, even in the greatest extremities.

We see a new instance of the perverseness of these *Scribes* and *Pharisees*. They *tempted Christ* by unreasonable demands; and he justly suffered them to go away without the additional demonstration they sought. It is not for us to prescribe to God what *degrees of evidence* he shall give us. Let us impartially pursue and improve what we have: and be very careful that our *sagacity*, and openness to *conviction*, in other matters of much less importance, may not condemn our *stupidity* or *obstinacy*, where the truths of God and the salvation of our souls are concerned.

It is our concern to *beware* of *erroneous principles* in religion, and of every corrupt *leaven* which might be ready to insinuate itself into our minds; especially of that, which, like the *leaven of the Pharisees*, would exalt our confidence in ourselves; or, like *that of the Sadducees*, would impair our persuasion of a future judgment, and our solicitous concern to live as in the views of it. May the *oracles of Divine truth* ever appear to our minds as the *rule*, by which all doctrines are to be tried! and let us, in the spirit of love, *contend earnestly for* that *faith*, which we believe to have been *once delivered to the saints;* that both our sentiments and actions may finally be found blameless, *unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ!* Amen.

SECTION VI.

MATT. XVI. 13—20. MARK VIII. 22—26. LUKE IX. 18—21.

AND he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw aught. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put *his* hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell *it* to any in the town.

And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the coasts *and* towns of Cesarea Philippi; and by the way it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom do men say, that I, the Son of man, am? And they answered, and said, Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist; but some *say*, Elias; and others, Jeremias: and others *say*, that one of the old prophets is risen again. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said unto him, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then he straitly charged and commanded his disciples, that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

We here behold the *great foundation* of our faith and hope, even *Jesus*, the *Rock of ages*, the *same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, (Heb. xiii. 8,) who is *Christ the Son of the living God. Other foundation can no man lay.* (1 Cor. iii. 11.) On him may our souls rest, and the fiercest tempests shall rage in vain!

Our *Lord* foretold that *the gates of hell should not* be able to *prevail against his church* as thus founded; and behold, even to this day, the accomplishment of the prediction. As *Christians* of one age have sunk into their graves, a new harvest has sprung up in the next; and, in spite of all the artifices of *Satan* to pervert *young minds*, and all the advantages with which he attacks them, *instead of the Fathers* have been *the children*, to be *accounted to the Lord for a generation.* (Ps. xlv. 16, and xxii 30.)

Let us thankfully adore the Divine goodness herein; and be very sensible how much we are indebted to that goodness in those *powers* communicated to the *apostles*, on whom, as subordinate *foundations* we are *built.* (Eph. ii. 20.) As they received so ample a *commission*, and *obtained grace from the Lord to be*

faithful to it, let us pay the humblest regard to their teachings; as well knowing, that what they have *bound on earth is bound in heaven*, and what they have inculcated, was solemnly confirmed by a Divine authority.

If we have listened with attention to those immortal writings of theirs, by which, *being dead*, they *yet speak;* and have found them the effectual means of *revealing Christ* in our hearts, in all his Divine glories and saving powers; let us remember that we owe it *not to flesh and blood*, or the most excellent *human instruments* alone, but to the influences of *our Father in heaven.*

That efficacious grace is freely exercised, and operates in *various methods*, on some, in a more *instantaneous* way; on others, like the power of *Christ* on the *blind man* of whom we have been reading, by more *gradual* advances. Let us be thankful for whatever light we receive, and press on to brighter discoveries; and join with them proportionable degrees of gratitude to *Christ*, and veneration for his gospel.

SECTION VII.

MATT. XVI. 21—28. MARK VIII. 31, IX. 1. LUKE IX. 22—27.

AND from that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, and to teach them, how that the Son of man must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and *of* the chief Priests, and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. And he spake that saying openly. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee. But when he had turned about, and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. And when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them all, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life for my

sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or be cast away? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's and with the holy angels. For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. And he said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power, the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Alas, how prone are our foolish souls to *relish and regard the things of men rather than those of God*? How justly do we deserve the *rebuke of our Lord*, who, while he speaks to *Peter* with such *abhorrence*, after all the *encomiums* he had just been giving him, shews us with what *indignation* we should reject every motion that would lead us to prefer our own ease or temporal interest to the glory of God and the happiness of man.

We shall never act so mean a part, if we cordially digest the lessons which *Christ* hath here taught us, and consider of how much greater importance the *salvation of the soul* is, than the *gain of the whole world* when opposed to it. Let us steadily pursue *this maxim* of divine wisdom, and with cheerfulness sacrifice every other interest to the views of an eternal felicity.

Does *Jesus* call us to *deny ourselves* for him? What difficulties should we not be ready to submit to, what pleasures should we not renounce *for him*, who *pleased not himself*, that he might shew his love to us; and *took upon him the form of a servant*, that he might *make us kings and priests unto God!* Does he require us to *take up our cross and follow him?* What sufferings should we not be willing to endure *for him;* and whither should we not consent to *follow him*, who has *borne the cross for us*, and willingly expired on it for our sakes!

A sense of *gratitude* for past favours might bear us triumphantly through all the opposition we might be called to encounter in his cause; how much more then may we be animated by the pleasing *hope*, that we shall another day be *confessed by Christ*

in the presence of his Father and of his holy angels. Let us represent to ourselves that august *presence*, that awful *day*, whenever a regard to *an adulterous and sinful generation* would lead us to *be ashamed of Christ and of his words.* So shall we certainly be brought to *see the kingdom of God in its glory:* and if it opens to us in the visions of the future state, we shall have no reason to be anxiously solicitous, though *death* should remove us from those lower regions, before the *gospel* hath that universal *triumph*, which the word of God encourageth his church to expect.

SECTION VIII.

MATT. XVII. 1—13. MARK IX. 2—13. LUKE IX. 28—36.

AND it came to pass after six days, (*or*, about an eight days after these sayings,) Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by them themselves to pray. And as he prayed, he was transfigured before them, *and* the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment became shining and glistering, exceeding white as snow, *or* as the light: so as no fuller on earth can white them. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; and if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias; not knowing what he said for he wist not what to say, for they were sore afraid. While he yet thus spake, behold there came a bright cloud, that overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And, behold, there came a voice out of the cloud, which

said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard *it*, they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. And when the voice was past, Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And suddenly when they had lift up their eyes, and had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen, *yet*, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the Scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is indeed already come, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him: likewise shall also the Son of man suffer many things of them, and be set at nought, *as* it is written of him. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

How glorious and delightful was this view of our blessed *Redeemer*, which the *apostles* had, when he was *transfigured before them*, clothed as it were, with the Divine *Shekinah* and *shining* with a lustre *like* that of *the sun!* How pleasing and how edifying must it be to them, to see with him *Moses* and *Elijah*, those two eminent saints, who had so many ages ago quitted our world, but whose names they had often read in the sacred records with wonder and reverence!

Well might *Peter* say, *It is good for us to be here.* Well might he be contented to resign his entertainments and his hopes elsewhere, that they might prolong these delightful moments, feasting their eyes with these Divine visions, and their minds with these more than human discourses. Nor can we wonder that the scene, transitory as it was, left so abiding a savour on his spirits, that in an *epistle* which he wrote many years after, and but little before his death, he should single *this*

story from a thousand others to attest it as he does, and to argue from it. (Compare 2 Peter i. 16—18.) But oh! how much more desirable is it to stand upon *mount Zion*, and to behold those *brighter glories*, which our *Jesus* wears in the heavenly regions! To behold not merely *Moses* and *Elijah*, but all the *prophets*, the *apostles*, and *martyrs*, and, in a word, all the *saints of God* in every age, whether to us personally known or unknown, surrounding him in radient circle; and not only to behold them, but to converse with them. *Lord, it is good for us to be there*, in our desires at least, and in our meditations, till thou pleasest to call us to that happy world, and to take us *thither*, where no *drowsiness* will cloud our eyes, where no *hurry* will discompose our thoughts; but where the perfection of *holiness* and of *love*, shall cast out every degree of *terror*, as well as of *sorrow*.

In the mean time let us reverently attend to that Saviour who appeared in this majestic form, and who comes recommended to us with so many *testimonials* of his Divine authority. He was again declared by a *voice from heaven* to be the *beloved son of God:* as such let us *hear him*, receiving all his revelations with the *assurance of faith*, and all his commands with the *obedience of love*. If these sentiments govern our hearts and our lives, the thoughts of that *departure* from this world, which we are *shortly to accomplish*, will be no grief or terror to our souls. Like our blessed *Master*, we may connect the views of it, and intermix discourse upon it, with the most delightful enjoyments and converse; nay, it will serve to render them yet more pleasing. For who would not long to be made *conformable to Christ* even in *his sufferings* and death, if it may be a means of *transforming us* into the resemblance of *his glories!*

SECTION IX.

MATT. XVII. 14—21. MARK IX. 14—29. LUKE IX. 37—43.

AND it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. And when he came to *his* disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the Scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to *him* saluted him. And he asked the Scribes, What ques-

tion ye with them? And, behold, one of the multitude came to him, kneeling down to him, and cried out, saying, Master, I have brought thee my son. Lord, I beseech thee, have mercy on my son: for he is mine only child. He is lunatic, and sore vexed, *and* hath a dumb spirit. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and wheresoever the spirit taketh him he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him, that he foameth again, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away; and bruising him hardly departeth from him. And I brought him to thy disciples, and besought *them* to cast him out, and they could not. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring thy son hither unto me. And they brought him unto him. And as he was yet a coming, when he saw him, straightway the devil threw him down, and tare him, and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And often times it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things *are* possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying unto him, *Thou* dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And *the spirit* cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And the child was cured from that very hour; and *he* delivered him again to his father. And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God.

And when he was come into the house, then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto

them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting.

The invidious opposition, which these *Scribes* and *Pharisees* made to *our Lord*, and the ill-natured joy they expressed, in what they imagined would disgrace his *disciples*, appears exceedingly odious; and it shews us the fatal effects of ambition, pride, and avarice, when they possess the hearts of those who should be (as these by their office were) *teachers of others*. Such qualities render those in the number of the most dangersous enemies of mankind, who ought to be its most affectionate friends and most useful benefactors. May the light of the gospel break in on their souls, and form them to a better temper!

The solicitous concern of this *parent* when he saw *his child* under such sad symptoms of *disorder*, may surely remind persons in that relation, of the sentiments, with which they should view those of *their children* who are, in a spiritual sense, under the power of *Satan;* and of the importunity, with which they should entreat that the hand of *Christ* may be stretched out for their rescue.

A lively exercise of *faith* is greatly to be desired in this and all other applications of this nature. But alas, how often do we find the remainders of a contrary principle! In how many instances does that passionate exclamation of *the father* in this story suit us! *Lord we believe, help thou our unbelief!* How difficult is it, in the midst of so much guilt and weakness, of so much perplexity and unworthiness, to *believe* the promises of forgiveness and preservation, of grace and glory? yet we may humbly hope that He, who by his grace has wrought the Divine principle in our souls, will maintain it there. Only let it be our concern to oppose those corruptions which would enervate and suppress it. Perhaps there are some of them, which will not be driven out, *but by prayer and fasting*, by deep humiliation, and more than ordinary solemnity and intenseness of devotion. But surely they have little regard to the peace and security of their souls, who can allot only a few hasty moments to them, when they have whole hours and days to bestow,n ot only on the labours, but even on the amusements of life!

SECTION X.

MATT. XVII. 22—27. MARK IX. 30—32. LUKE IX. 43—45. JOHN VII. 1.

AND after these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him: and he would not that any man should know *it*. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, Jesus taught his disciples and said unto them, while they abode in Galilee, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: For the Son of man shall be betrayed and delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and after that he is killed, he shall rise again the third day. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they were exceeding sorry; and were afraid to ask him of that saying.

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute *money* came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up: And when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

How slow and untractable were the minds of the *apostles*, who *understood not* these plain things when thus inculcated again and again! But on the other hand, how much integrity does it shew in the *historian*, to record what seemed so little to the honour of himself and his brethren! In this respect, and

many others, surely credit rises to the *gospel*, even by occasion of the *infirmities* of those to whom it was committed, and *out of weakness they are made strong*.—The lenity of our *blessed Lord* was truly admirable, that he should bear with such *stupidity* in his *disciples* with so much gentleness and patience, and should with so much earnestness, go on to *renew his instructions* to them. Let us, however, learn to be upon our guard against the prejudices of worldly interest, since, as we see, they may take such strong hold of minds, in the main, upright and pious. And therefore let us earnestly pray, that God would give us a greater relish for spiritual and eternal blessings.

SECTION XI.

Mark ix. 33—50. Luke 46—50.

And being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. *And* they had disputed among themselves. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, *the same* shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him by him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me. For he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and he followeth not us; and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part.

For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say

unto you, he shall not lose his reward. And whosoever shall offend one of *these* little ones, that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come: but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, and to be cast into everlasting fire that never shall be quenched: where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into everlasting fire that shall never be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt *is* good: but if the salt has lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

How deeply is *pride* rooted in the heart of fallen man; when neither the daily instructions, nor edifying example of the humble *Jesus* could prevent it from appearing, even among the *apostles* themselves, in so mean and unworthy a manner! Still did worldly interest and grandeur so intoxicate their minds, that they seemed even *against hope* to have *hoped* for it, and to have found out a strange kind of method of grafting these expectations, even on the very *cross* of *Christ*, which was intended to destroy them.

How edifying and affecting are these lessons, which the meek and lowly *Redeemer* gave us, with this *little child in his arms*, whose example we are required to copy! Lord, give us of thy *regenerating grace*, that we may do it; that we may *be converted, and become as little children*, free from avarice and ambition,

malice, and prejudice! How melancholy is it to think, that many, who have by their *office* been employed to read and explain this lesson to others, and who have not been *children in understanding*, seem to have learnt so little of it themselves; as if it had never been at all intended for that order of men, to whom indeed it was immediately addressed! If there be any such yet remaining in the *Christian ministry*, let them seriously weigh the *woe* denounced on *that man by whom the offence cometh.* May the infinite mercies of God be extended to all professing *Christians*, who give themselves up to worldly pursuits and projects: and especially to those who make the *church of Christ* only a kind of *porch* to the *temple* of *mammon*, and the *sacred office* itself merely a convenient vehicle for swallowing down riches and honours! May Divine grace deliver us from such fatal snares, and form us to that *self-denial* and *mortification*, without which we cannot be the true *disciples* of *Christ;* but, after having *pierced* ourselves *through with many* unnecessary *sorrows* here shall plunge ourselves deep into eternal perdition!

May these repeated and dreadful representations of *future misery*, which we have now been reading, impress our souls in a becoming manner! Blessed *Jesus!* thou bringest *good tidings;* yet which of the *prophets* under the legal dispensation ever represented *the terrors of the Lord* in so awful a light, as that in which thou hast placed them! Let none of thy *ministers* be afraid to imitate thee herein! nor let any of thy *followers* presume to censure them for it! May we all be effectually *warned to flee from the wrath to come;* and, as we would not another day be *salted with fire*, may our hearts now be *seasoned with thy grace!* and may we, by a modest and *peaceful*, a benevolent and useful life, be daily bearing a testimony to it, and, as *the salt of the earth*, may we be labouring to cure the growing corruption of the world about us!

SECTION XII.

Matthew xviii. 1—20.

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall

receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him, that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that *sheep*, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Verily I say unto you, Whatsover ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall

loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Thus happy are the *meanest servants of Christ*, in the care and favour of their *heavenly Master*, and in the *angelic guard*, which by his high command, are continually attending even the *lambs of his flock*. So condescending are the *blessed spirits* above, that even the *greatest* of them do not disdain *to minister unto the heirs of salvation!* (Heb. i. 14.) Let not the wisest and greatest men *despise* those, whom *angels* honour with their guardianship and care; especially since *the Son of man*, that merciful *Shepherd*, has come forth into this *wilderness* to *save that which was lost*, and even to *seek* and recover us when we were *gone astray*, and should otherwise have wandered on to our eternal ruin.

What could have been more happy for the *church of Christ* than the observation of this plain and easy *rule*, which he has given for ending *disputes* among his followers! And yet who, that sees the conduct of the generality of *Christians*, would imagine they had ever heard of such a rule? Instead of this *private expostulation*, which might often bring a debate to a speedy and amicable conclusion, what *public charges!* what passionate complaints! what frequent and laboured attempts to take, if the least scandalous yet not the least pernicious kind of *revenge*, by wounding the characters of those, whom we imagine to have injured us!

As for *church-censures*, how lamentable is it, that they have been so little conformable to *this rule*, and in many instances so contrary to it, in almost every *Christian nation* under heaven! Is this the form in which *ecclesiastical judgments* do appear in the *Popish*, or even in the *Protestant* world? Are these the maxims by which they have been, or by which they are determined, even by those who claim the largest share in the promises made to the *apostles*, and boast with the greatest confidence of the presence and authority of *Christ* with them, to confirm their sentences, and to sanctify perhaps rapine and murder? Vain wretched confidence! Let us earnestly pray that this dishonour to the *Christian name* may every where be wiped away; and that true religion, and even common humanity, may not with such solemn *mockery* be destroyed *in the name of the Lord*.

Let humble submission be always paid to *apostolical decisions*

in every difficulty; and let the *promises* made to these leaders in the *Christian Church* be some encouragement even to us, *on whom the ends of the world are come.* None but an Omnipresent, and consequetly a Divine Person, could say, *Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.* His power and his goodness can never be impaired; let it therefore be an encouragement to *social prayer;* and let the remembrance of *our Redeemer's* continued presence and inspection, engage us to behave ourselves agreeably to the relation that we claim to him, and to those expectations from him which we profess.

SECTION XIII.

Matt. xviii. 21—35.

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called

him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? and his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

How unreasonable and how odious does a severe and uncharitable temper appear, when we view it in the light of this *parable!* Yet what light can be more just than this? We are *indebted to God* more than *ten thousand talents;* from our infancy we begin to contract the debt, and are daily increasing it in our ripening years: justly, therefore, might he *cast us* into the *prison of hell* till we *paid the uttermost farthing.* And were we to *fall at his feet,* with a promise of *paying him all* on his *patient* forbearance, it must be the language of gross ignorance, or of presumptuous folly, when addressed to a Being who knows our poverty, and knows that, in consequence of it, we are utterly incapable of making him any amends. But he magnifies his grace in the kind offers of a free *forgiveness;* and shall we who receive it, and hold our lives and all our hope by it, *take our brethren by the throat,* because they *owe us a few pence?* or shall we carry along with us deep continued resentment, glowing like a hidden fire in our bosoms? *God forbid!* For surely if we do so, *out of our own mouth shall we be condemned,* while we acknowledge the justice of the *sentence* here passed against this *cruel servant.*

Christ himself has made the application: *so shall my heavenly Father deal with you, if you do not forgive your brethren:* and he has instructed us elsewhere to ask *forgiveness* only as we grant it. (Matt. vi. 14, 15.) Let us then from this moment discharge our *hearts* of every sentiment of *rancour* and *revenge,* nor ever allow a *word,* or even a *wish,* that savours of it. And as ever we hope our addresses to the throne of Divine mercy should meet with a favourable audience, let us *lift up holy hands, without wrath,* as well as *without doubting.* (1 Tim. ii. 8.)

SECTION XIV.

John vii. 1—13.

Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.—For *there is* no man *that* doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him. Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come; but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you: but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast, for my time is not yet fully come. When he had said these words unto them, he abode *still* in Galilee.

But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people. Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

We see how little the greatest external advantages can do without the Divine blessing, when some of the *nearest relations* of *Christ* himself, by whom he had been most intimately known, were not prevailed upon to *believe in him.* Who then can wonder if some remain incorrigible in the most regular and pious families? How much more valuable is *the union* to him, which is founded on a cordial and obedient *faith*, than *that* which arose from the *bands of nature?* and how cautiously should we watch against those *carnal prejudices*, by which even the *brethren of Christ* were alienated from him?

Our Lord, we see, used a prudent care to avoid persecution and danger, till *his time was fully come;* and it is our duty to endeavour, by all wise and upright precautions, to secure and preserve ourselves, that we may have opportunities for farther service.

In the course of such service we must expect, especially if we appear under a public character, to meet with a variety of *censures*; but let us remember that *Jesus* himself went *through evil report and good report;* by some applauded as *a good man*, but by others, and those the greater part of his countrymen, condemned as *deceiving the people.* Let us learn of *Christ* patiently to endure such injurious treatment; and endeavourr to behave ourselves so, that we may have a *testimony* in the consciences of men, and in the presence of God, that, after the example of our great Master, *in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world.* (2 Cor. i. 12.) Then will our names be had in remembrance, and the honour and reward of our faithful obedience continued, when the memories of those that reviled us are perished with them.

SECTION XV.

John vii. 14—24.

Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent me, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. Did not Moses give you the law, and *yet* none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.—Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath-day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken: are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit

whole on the sabbath-day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Let us learn of our meek and humble *Master* to refer the *honour* of all we know and do to *Divine instruction* communicated to us, and *Divine grace* working in and by us; that, *seeking the glory of God*, we may have the surest evidence, that we are truly *his*. Let us on all occasions remember that *integrity* and *uprightness* will be a certain security to us against dangerous *mistakes* in matters of religion. If *the light* we already have, be faithfully improved, we may humbly hope that more will be given us; nor shall we then fail of convincing evidence, that the *gospel-doctrine is of God;* for the experience of its power on our hearts will check our *passions*, and destroy the prejudices, that would prevent the *truth* from taking place in our minds.

Let us receive *his doctrine* as *Divine*, and hearken unto *Christ* as *sent of God;* and whatsoever be the vile *reproaches* we may meet with from a wicked world, and the malicious *designs* it may form against us, let us be resolute and steadfast in the practice of the duties he has taught us, that *with well-doing we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* (1 Peter ii. 15.)

Our Lord was reviled as a *demoniac* and a *lunatic:* but instead of *rendering railing for railing*, he replied in the words of gentleness and sobriety. So let us endeavour to conquer the rudeness of those *attacks* we may meet with in his cause; that we may, if possible, remove the *prejudices* so fatal to those that entertain them, and form men to that equitable and impartial *judgment*, which would soon turn all their cavils against *Christ* into admiration, praise, and obedience.

SECTION XVI.

John vii. 25—36.

Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? —But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.—Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. But I

know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me. Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this *man* hath done? The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and *then* I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find *me;* and where I am, *thither* ye cannot come. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What *manner* of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find *me;* and, where I am, *thither* ye cannot come?

So confident is *error* in its own decisions, and so vain in its self applauses! These unhappy people, every way mistaken, censure *their rulers* for a supposed credulity, in seeming, as it were to acquiesce in *Christ's* claim to be *the Messiah;* and imagined themselves, no doubt, exceeding wise in rejecting him, while they blindly took it for granted he was the *son of Joseph*, and had not patience to wait for the authentic story of his miraculous conception. Surely men had need to look well to the force of those arguments, on which they venture their souls by rejecting the gospel.

Our Lord answered their *secret reasonings*, in a manner which might justly have alarmed them, charging them with ignorance of *that God*, whom they pretended to *know*, and whom, with a presumptuous confidence, they claimed as *theirs*. And oh, that it may not be found at last, that many who have appeared most confident of their interest in God, neither know him, nor are *known by him!*

The blessed *Jesus*, who is *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person*, has the completest *knowledge* of the *Father*. May we be so wise and happy as to seek instructions from him, *that the eyes of our understandings may be enlightened*, and the temper of our hearts proportionably regulated, by all the discoveries of the Divine Being which he makes!

How obstinate and desperately hardened were the hearts of those, who, notwithstanding all the proofs that *Jesus* gave of his

Divine mission, were yet so far from hearkening to him, as to *seek* opportunities *to destroy him!* So dangerous and fatal is the prevalence of *error* in such as *like not to retain God in their knowledge*, that they will even venture on the greatest wickedness, when once they are *given over to a reprobate mind*, (Rom. i. 28.)—May God preserve us from *a spirit of delusion*, and fill us with that *wisdom*, that we may *know the things belonging to our peace*, and, being ready to *receive the truth in the love of it*, may we acknowledge and attend to *Christ* as *sent of God!*

May we learn this heavenly wisdom in time, since the hour is approaching, when *Christ* will be *sought in vain*, and all correspondence between him and sinners will be finally cut off! *Where he is, they cannot* then *come;* and to be excluded from him will at length appear insupportable misery, even to those, who, with proud folly and fatal self-sufficiency are now most ready to say unto him, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of* thee or *thy ways*. (Job xxi. 14.)

SECTION XVII.

John vii. 37—53.

In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath saith, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given:* because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) Many of the people, therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the prophet, Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him. And some of them would have taken him: but no man laid hands on him.

Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge *any* man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. And every man went unto his own house.

With what delight and thankfulness should we hear this gracious *proclamation of Christ*, which he now made in the *temple*, and a while after repeated from the *throne* of his glory! *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink;* yea, *whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely.* (Rev. xxii. 17.) Blessed *Jesus*, had we been allowed to have prescribed to thee a *form of words*, in which thy kind purposes towards us should have been expressed, what could we have invented more pathetic, more condescending, or more reviving!—May we *thirst* for the blessings of thy grace, and in the confidence of *faith* apply unto thee for them; and particularly for these communications of thy *Spirit*, which are so highly excellent and desirable, and indeed so necessary for us! Supply us with them, we entreat thee, in so rich an abundance, that we, in our different spheres, may supply others, and from us there may *flow rivers of living water!*

Well might such *gracious words* as these disarm the rage of enemies and persecutors. Let us add our testimony to theirs, and say, *Never man spake as Jesus speaks.* Let us hear him with calm and thankful attention, while his voice still sounds in his *word.* Happy are those *that know the joyful sound!* (Ps. lxxxix. 15.) The *Pharisees*, like *deaf adders, stopped their ears* against *the voice of the Charmer;* and, while they proudly censured the *populace* as a brutal herd, and gloried in their own superior wisdom, *rejected the counsel of God;* rashly judging without serious inquiry, and weakly borne down by vulgar senseless *prejudices* against *names* and *places*, which is all *the senate of Israel* opposes to the the solid argument of *Nicodemus!* That good man, already considerably improved by his interview with *Jesus*, was undoubtedly confirmed in his adherence to him, by observing the methods of their opposition; and where magistrates

arm their *authority* to overbear *argument*, they will, probably, in the judgment of impartial men, produce a suspicion, at least, that they know their cause to be incapable of a rational defence.

SECTION XVIII.

John viii. 1—11.

Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the Scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with *his* finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not*. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard *it*, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She saith, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

The devout *retirements* of *Christ*, and his early renewed *labours*, so often come in view, that, after having made some progress in his history, we are ready to pass them over as things of course. But let us remember, that in some degree they call upon us *to go and do likewise;* and will another day condemn those, who, while they call themselves *his disciples*, are given up to ease and luxury, and suffer every little amusement or sensual gratification to lead them into an *omission* of their duty to God and

their fellow-creatures; an *omission* especially aggravated in those, whom he has appointed to be *teachers* of others, and who have therefore so many peculiar errands to the throne of grace, and so many engagements *in the morning to sow*, or to prepare *the seed* of religious instruction, *and in the evening not to withhold their hand* from dispensing it. (Eccles. xi. 6.)

While *Jesus is teaching*, his *enemies* address him, not only as an *instructor*, but as a *judge;* and yet, by this specious form of honour and respect, they sought only to *insnare* and *destroy him*. So unsafe would it be always to judge of men's intentions by the first appearances of their actions! But *our Lord*, in his answer, united, as usual, the *wisdom of the serpent* with the *innocence* and gentleness *of the dove;* and in his conduct to *this criminal* shewed at once that tenderness and faithfulness, which might have the most effectual tendency to impress and reclaim her! if a heart capable of such infidelity and wickedness could be impressed and reclaimed at all. *Go thy way*, said he to this adultress, *and sin no more*. Perhaps the charge may have little weight with such abandoned transgressors as she; but let all learn to improve their escapes from danger, and the continued exercise of Divine patience towards them, as an engagement to speedy and thorough reformation.

Let the *force of conscience*, and the *power of Christ* over it (both which so evidently appeared in this instance,) teach us to reverence the dictates of our own minds, and to do nothing to bring them under a sense of guilt; which, through the secret energy of our *Redeemer*, wrought so powerfully on these *Pharisees*, that, hypocritical and vain glorious as they were, they could not command themselves so far as even to save appearances; but the *eldest* and *gravest* among them were *the first* to confess their guilt, by withdrawing from the presence of so holy a *Prophet*, from the *temple* of God, and from the *criminal* whom they came to persecute. A like consciousness of being *ourselves to blame* will abate the boldness and freedom of our proceedings with *others* for their faults, if, while we *judge* them, we are *self-condemned;* nor will the authority of a superior *age* or *station* of life bear us out against these *inward reproaches*.

SECTION XIX.

John viii. 12—29.

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself: thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, *yet* my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh: I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.

Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even *the same* that I said unto you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. They understood not that

he spake to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*, and *that* I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

Such may our character ever be, as we desire the supports of the Divine presence! Whoever be displeased may we *always do the things which please him;* and with all diligence let us *labour*, *whether present* in the body, *or absent* from it, to be still approved and *accepted of him!* (2 Cor. v. 9.)

Our blessed *Redeemer* is the *light of the world.* With how much pleasure should we behold his rays! With how much cheerfulness should we *follow*, whithersoever he leads us; as well knowing that we shall not then *walk in darkness;* and God forbid, we should ever choose to continue in it, as the shelter and screen of wicked works!

May we, with all candour and humility, regard and submit to *the testimony*, which *the Father has borne to him* in so express and incontestible a manner. Dreadful would be the consequence of our refusing to do it. The doom of these wretched *Jews* would be ours, *to die in our sins.* And oh, how insupportable will that guilty burden prove in a dying hour, and before the tribunal of God! How will it sink us into condemnation and despair! In vain shall those, who now despise him, then *seek* admittance to the world where he is: *thither they cannot come;* and if excluded from *him*, must be excluded from happiness.

Justly might it long since have been our case: for surely he *has many things to say* of us, *and to judge concerning us*, should he *lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet,* after his having been *so long with us*, yea, after we have as it were, seen him *lifted up*, and *set forth* as *crucified among us.* (Gal. iii. 1.)

May this faithful *admonition* prevail to our conviction and reformation; that our everlasting condemnation may not farther illustrate the reasonableness, yea, the necessity of it, and the madness of hardening our hearts against it!

SECTION XX.

John viii. 30—47.

As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, *even* God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell *you* the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth,

why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God.

May we approve ourselves the sincere *disciples of Jesus*, by *continuing in his word*, and being *faithful* even *unto death*, as ever we expect *a crown of life!* (Rev. ii. 10.) Without this, external privileges will turn to but little account. The *children of Abraham* may be the *children of Satan;* and they are so, if they imitate the temper and works of the accursed *fiend*, rather than of the holy *patriarch. The devil was from the beginning a liar, and a murderer;* and all falsehood and malice are from him. Let us earnestly pray, that we may be freed from them, and from the tyranny of every other sin, to which we have been enslaved; that *Christ, the Son*, may *make us free* of his Father's family, and of his heavenly kingdom! Then we *shall be free indeed*, and no more be reduced to *bondage*.

May we prove that we are *the children of God* by our readiness to *hear* and receive *the words* of our blessed *Redeemer*, the words of incarnate truth, and wisdom, and love; whom none of his enemies could ever *convict of sin*, nor ever accused him of it but to their own confusion! May we resemble him in the innocence and holiness of his life; that we may the more easily and gracefully imitate that courage and zeal, with which he reproved the haughtiest sinners, and bore his testimony against the errors and vices of that degenerate age and nation in which he lived!

SECTION XXI.

John viii. 48—59.

Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil; Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto him, now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater

than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, if I honour myself, my honour is nothing; it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I should be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

With what *patience* did our blessed *Redeemer* bear, and with what *meekness of wisdom* did he answer the most virulent and opprobrious language! When he was rudely charged with being *a Samaritan* and *having a demon*, he *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*, (Heb. xii. 3.) and *being* thus *reviled, he reviled not again*, (1 Pet. ii. 23.) And shall we too keenly resent the *reflections* which are thrown upon us! May but our conscience witness for us, and we need not fear all that are against us!

Christ honoured his father, and *sought not his own glory*. So may we be careful of the honour of God, and cheerfully commit to him the guardianship and care of our reputation! And we shall find, *there is one that seeketh and judgeth* in our favour.

It is a great and important promise which *our Lord* here makes, *If any one keep my word, he shall never see death*. Sense seems to plead against it; but he is *the resurrection and the life*, and hath assured us, he will make it good. Let us therefore be *strong in faith, giving glory to God:* (Rom. iv. 20.) Though not only *Abraham* and *the prophets*, but *Peter* and *Paul*, and the other *apostles are dead*, yet this word shall be gloriously accomplished. Still they live to him and shortly shall they be for ever recovered from the power of the grave: so that *death* is to them comparatively as nothing. With them may our final portion be, and we may set light by the reproaches, clamours, and accusations of prejudiced, ignorant and sinful men!

Adored be that gracious Providence that determined our ex-

istence to begin in *that* happy *day* which *prophets* and *patriarchs desired to see*, and in the distant view of which *Abraham rejoiced!*

Let it be also *our joy:* for *Jesus Christ* is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;* nor could *the heart* of those holy men fully *conceive those things, which God had prepared for them that love him*, and which *he has* now *revealed unto us by his Spirit.* (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.)

SECTION XXII.

John ix. 1—23.

And as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from *his* birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others *said*, He is like him: *but* he said, I am *he*. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the Sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.

Then again the Pharisees also asked him, How he had received his sight? He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath-day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not: or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. These *words* spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

Oh that the zeal of our great Master might quicken us, his too negligent servants! Still is he *the light of the world*, by his doctrines, precepts, and example. May our eyes by Divine grace be opened to see, and our hearts be disposed to love and to follow this light! It was a governing maxim with him, and he meant it also for our admonition, *I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, wherein no man can work.* We are sent into the world on an important errand, to *work out our own salvation*, and that of others: may we improve the *present day;* and so much the rather, as we see the *night* approaching! On some the *shadows of the evening* are already drawing on; and as to others, their *sun may go down at noon.* Let us therefore, waving the *curiosity* of unprofitable speculators, apply ourselves seriously to the business of life, and zealously seize every opportunity of usefulness.

Our *Lord*, as it should seem *unasked*, and by the person on whom it was wrought *unknown*, performed this important and extraordinary cure. And the *manner* in which he did it is worthy of notice: he *anointed his eyes with clay*, and then comman-

ded him *to wash.* Clay laid on the eye-lids might almost blind a man that had sight; but what could it do towards curing blindness? It reminds us that God is no farther from the accomplishment of any purpose or event when he works *with*, than *without means;* and that all the creatures are only *that* which his almighty operation makes them.

The *blind man* believed, and received the immediate benefit of it. Had he reasoned, like *Naaman* on the impropriety of the *means*, he had justly been left in darkness. Lord, may our proud hearts be subdued to the methods of thy recovering grace! And may we leave it to thee to choose how thou wilt bestow favours, which it is our highest interest on any terms to receive.

It must be a satisfaction to every true *Christian* to observe the curiosity and exactness with which these *Pharisees* inquired into the *miracles of Christ*, and how thoroughly they canvassed every circumstance of them. A truth like this need not fear any examination. Every new witness which they heard confirmed the case, and confounded the obstinacy of their unbelief.—But surely the weakness of *the parents* was very pitiable, who, in the midst of the evidence and obligation of such a miracle, were more *afraid* of incurring a human sentence than of offending God, by failing to own so great a favour, and to confess the blessed Person by whom it was wrought. *The fear of man bringeth a snare*, (Prov. xxix. 25;) but they whose eyes *Christ* has opened in a spiritual sense will see a glory and excellence in him which will animate them boldly to bear their testimony to him, in defiance of all the censures which men can pass, or of all the penalties by which they can enforce them.

SECTION XXIII.

John ix. 24—38.

Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner *or no*, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear *it* again? will ye also be his disciples? Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We

know that God spake unto Moses: *as for* this *fellow*, we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and *yet* he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

So little does *truth* fear repeated examination; and thus does it, after every trial, *come forth like* pure *gold* out of the furnace. So did this *miracle of Christ* appear to these subtile adversaries, so will the *Christian cause* appear to all who will diligently search into its evidence.

Who can forbear wondering at the obstinacy of these *Pharisees;* and, on the same principles, at that of the present *Jews*, who, while they acknowledge that *God spake by Moses*, because he wrought *miracles*, will not, on the evidence of yet more various and glorious *miracles*, and those attested beyond all contradiction, acknowledge the authority of the *Son of God* himself?

But we see this poor illiterate creature (for such he undoubtedly was,) with the advantage of *truth* on his side, baffles all the sophistry of his most learned antagonists. *Great is the truth, and it will prevail.* Great is *this truth*, so fundamental to the gospel, that *Jesus is the Son of God:* and *this* also, which is so important to natural religion and revealed, that *God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and do his will, him he hears*, and most favourably regards. May we be truly *devout*, and add to our devotion an obedient regard to the Divine will, and *the eyes of the Lord will be upon us, and his ears be open to our cry!* (Psalm xxxiv. 15.) Then, being fa-

vourably owned of *God*, we shall have no reason to fear the censures of *men*. If they *cast us out*, *Christ* will receive us, and perhaps *reveal himself to us* with more *freedom*, in proportion to the *injuries* we sustain from them.

SECTION XXIV.

John ix. 39—41, x. 1—10.

And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see ; and *that* they which see might be made blind. And *some* of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also ? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin : but now ye say, We see ; therefore your sin remaineth.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief or a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth ; and the sheep hear his voice : and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out ; and when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him : for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him : for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them : but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers : but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door : by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy : I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

Let us hear, with an holy awe on our spirits that the *Lord Jesus Christ came into the world for* purposes of *judgmen* as

well as of *mercy*, and make it our humble prayer that we may be *enlightened* by him, and not sealed up under aggravated *darkness*, as a punishment for our obstinacy and impenitence; for then all the means of knowledge which we have so basely perverted will rise up to condemn us.

Let Christ be regarded by us as *the door* from whom all true teachers derive their authority, and to whom they direct their administrations: and let it be our care that we *enter by this door*. Let inferior *shepherds* learn their duty, so plainly suggested here, let them learn to know their sheep, and take as particular notice as they can of each single person committed to their care; and let them *go before them* in all the paths of duty: for what could the greatest enemy to the flock do worse than to lead them by example into the paths of destruction?

Happy souls, who are *entered in* by this gate! Their safety, their comfort, is secure; they enjoy a holy liberty and plenty, and *going in and comtng out they find pasture*. If we are strangers to that entertainment and refreshment which arises from ordinances (those *green pastures* which *Christ* hath provided for *his sheep* in the wilderness,) we have a great deal of reason to fear that we belong not to his flock. *He came that his sheep might have life, and that they migh have it more abundantly;* that greater provision might be made for their instruction and consolation now, till they are brought to those *better pastures* he intends for them above: May his grace prepare us for them! and his hand will certainly conduct us to them; nor need we fear the darkest passage in our way.

SECTION XXV.

John x. 11—21.

I AM the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice: and there shall be one fold, *and* one shep-

herd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, these are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

There is not, perhaps, any where to be found a greater instance of the force of *prejudice* than in these perverse *Jews*, who censured *Christ* as *a lunatic* and *a demoniac* for one of the gravest and most excellent speeches that was ever delivered. Let us review it with all due attention and regard.

Let us consider *Christ* as the *good Shepherd*, and humbly commit our souls to him, as ever we desire they should be safe and happy. We have known his kind regards to the flock in exposing and *laying down his life for them*. And he hath not *laid it down* in vain. Delightful thought! Our compassionate *Shepherd*, even when *the sword of the Lord* was *awakened* to *smite him*, has not so fallen as to rise no more; but in this great and good work he voluntarily *laid down*, so he has also *re-assumed his life;* and still bears on his heart the same concern for his flock, and uses his renewed life and exalted dignity for their security and happiness.

Let us humbly *acknowledge him* as *acknowledged by the Father:* let us courageously and gratefully own him, and be ready to *lay down our lives* also *for him*. We are those *other sheep*, of whom he spake, *who were not* originally *of the fold*, but by his grace are now *brought in* to the great *Shepherd and Bishop of souls*. Let us pray that the boundaries of *his fold* may be still more extended, and the whole number of his elect accomplished; that all the flock may at length appear together, and may be conducted by him to the regions of that immortal life which he determines to give it.

In the mean time let us maintain all proper regards to him, and especially the most cheerful confidence in his care; repeating with evangelical views, and so with a peculiar sublimity of sense, those words of *David* as our own, (Psalm xxiii. 1—4.) "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want: he maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the

still waters: he restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake: yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

SECTION XXVI.

John x. 22—42.

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him. How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand, My Father which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and *no man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. I and *my* Father are one.

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father *is* in me, and I in him.

Therefore they sought again to take him; but he escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized: and there he abode. And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed him there.

It is worthy of remark, that we here see *our Lord Jesus* at a *festival*, appointed only by human authority, in commemoration of a national deliverance. He came from Galilee to observe it in the temple, though *it was winter;* and brought with him, as at all times, a heart glowing with the most ardent and amiable zeal, for the honour of God, and the salvation of men, even of those who were studying to insnare and destroy him.

What prudence, mingled with spirit and sweetness, runs through *his answer* to them! What inestimable *blessings* does he propose, to invite them to enter into *his fold!* May we never forget these gracious words! May we ever be entitled to all the comfort of them! *I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* Lord, may we be found in the number of those secure and happy souls, even of those who *know thee*, and who *obey thy voice and follow thee*, whithersoever thou leadest them by thine example, thy Providence, and thy Spirit! Then may we look on our *eternal life* and happiness, as inviolably *secure.* Safely indeed may we trust it in *his hands*, who could say, in so sublime, and so glorious a sense, *I and the Father are one.* The enemies of our salvation must triumph then over Omnipotence itself, before they can *wrest the sheep of Christ out of his hands*; nor will his fidelity to God, or his love to them, suffer them to be seduced by *fraud* any more than destroyed by *violence.*

Blessed situation of thy *little flock!* O thou faithful, thou compassionate, thou *Almighty Shepherd*, gather thou our souls with theirs; and never suffer us to forget of how great importance it is, that we still continue near thee, that we look up to thee for our defence and safety, and confide not in our own power and wisdom, but in thine!

Who could have imagined, that any heart could have been so base as to have intended evil, or any hands so cruel, as to have armed themselves with instruments of death, against *such a person*, while speaking such words as these? Yet behold, these *Jews* do it; and that even in so sacred a place, as *the temple* itself; as the genuine *offspring of those, who slew the prophet and*

priest of the Lord, even *at his altar*. (Compare Matt. xxiii. 31, 35. and Luke xi. 48, 51.) but his wise and gentle *reply* disarmed them for a few months; and the Divine care and power in an extraordinary manner provided for his *escape*, and once more *rescued him* from their murderous hands.

Happy the inhabitants of the *country about Jordan*, to which he retired! especially happy, in that they *knew the day of their visitation!* The testimony of *John the Baptist* is now recollected to excellent purposes, though he himself was mouldering in his tomb: nor is there any thing, which a faithful *Minister* will more earnestly desire, than that even *while dead he may yet speak*, for the honour of *Christ*, and the salvation of souls.

SECTION XXVII.

John xi. 1—16.

Now a certain man was sick, *named* Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha (It was *that* Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard *that*, he said, this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to *his* disciples, Let us go into Judea again. *His* disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee: and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazareth sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he

sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe: nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

How happy was this family of *Lazarus* in which *Christ* was so frequent a guest! how happy *Lazarus* and *his sisters*, who were so peculiarly *beloved* by him! Yet *sickness* and *death* invaded that family; and this excellent man, as it should seem, in flourishing circumstances (ver. 19,) and perhaps too in early youth, was snatched away, on a sudden, by what appeared a very untimely stroke. The *friends* of *Christ* must *be sick, and die*, as well as others; and *no man knoweth either love, or hatred, by all that is before them* under the sun; (Eccles. ix. 1.) Let us therefore *judge nothing before the time;* (1 Cor. iv. 5.) This *sickness* and *death* of *Lazarus* was *for the glory of God:* and may all our personal and domestic sufferings be so! To this, O Lord, may our *life* be consecrated, and to this may our *death* be subservient! We shall not then feel our dying pangs in half their bitterness, when our hearts are inflamed with a zeal for thy glory, and when we see that even those pangs are promoting it.

Our Lord delayed his coming to this dear friend in his extremity: and perhaps it occasioned, not only many an anxious, but many a suspicious thought, both to *Lazarus* and his sisters; yet the intent of *this delay* was both gracious and important. Let us not *limit* our Divine Master as to the time or manner of his appearance for us: let us not censure him if it be for a while put off. It is to exercise our faith and patience, and to make the mercy more signal and more welcome.

At length a resolution is formed to *go into Judea;* though but a little while ago the *Jews* had assaulted him, even in a sacred place, with burning malice in their hearts, and the instruments of death in their hands. But when Providence called, *none of these things* could *move* our blessed Redeemer. *neither counted he his life dear unto him, that he might finish his course with joy.* (Acts xx. 24.) May we shew the like intrepidity of our soul in his service! *walking in the day*, that we *may not stumble*, and taking all proper opportunities of performing the duties of life while the season of it lasts; and then, when *the night* of death *comes*, it will close our eyes in peaceful slumbers. The *repose* of the breathless *corpse*, insensible of alarms, and sorrows, and cares, will be a lovely emblem of the sweeter *repose* of the *soul* in the

arms of Divine love, till ere long *Christ* shall come to *awaken us out of our sleep* by that *general resurrection* of which *this of Lazarus* was a figure and pledge.

Let these glorious thoughts and expectations animate us to all the returns of affection, duty, and zeal. Let them teach us the temper of *Thomas* when he said, *Let us go and die with him.* "Blessed *Jesus!* how much better is it to *die with* and *for* thee, who art *the resurrection and the life*, than to prolong these wretched days of absence, meanness, and affliction, by forsaking thee when thou art leading us into danger!"

SECTION XXVIII.

John xi. 17—46.

Then when Jesus came, he found that he had *lain* in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off; And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat *still* in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give *it* thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus saith unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard *that*, she arose quickly, and came unto

him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she arose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said, could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been *dead* four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up *his* eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me: And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said *it*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

Let us by faith continually regard *Jesus* (as his discourses and actions concur to represent him) as *the resurrection and the life;* believing on this glorious specimen here given of it, that he can, and will finally cause *all that are in the graves* to *hear his voice, and* to *come forth*, (John v. 28, 29.) A most delightful thought, which we should often apply both to ourselves and to our pious friends! Let the consideration, that they are to *arise in the resurrection at the last day*, moderate our sorrows for their removal, and forbid *our mourning as others that have no hope.* (1 Thess. iv. 13.) Were *a resurrection on earth* expected, though at the distance of several years, we should consider them only as persons absent on a long journey, and expected their return with patience and cheerfulness: but oh, how much more certain is *the resurrection of the just* than the issue of any of our journeys or expectations in life!

We often *go*, in our thoughts at least, *to the grave to weep;* but let us not forget to raiss our contemplations higher, even to *Jesus*, who here expressed such tender sentiments of compassion, and *wept* when he saw the *tears* of others, though he knew he was going to *wipe them away* by restoring that friend whom they lamented.—*He afflicted himself*, and it may be proper for *us* sometimes to do it, and to hold down our thoughts to those views of things which may give us pain and regret; if that attention be so adjusted and attempted as only to produce *a sadness of the countenance* that may *improve the heart.* (Eccles. vii. 3.)

Let the *modesty* with which *our Lord* conducted this grand and solemn scene teach us to avoid all mean transports of self-applause, and all fondness for ostentation and parade. Like *Jesus*, let us *in all our ways acknowledge God*, and maintain a continual dependance on his influence, to be sought by fervent *prayer;* and then we may go forth to every duty with a courageous and cheerful assurance that he will carry us honourably and comfortably through it. Let us but stedfastly *believe*, and we shall *see the glory of God:* he will manifest his power for our help; and when our case appears to be remediless, then is the time for his almighty hand to save.

Let us adore and trust in *him* who was armed with so divine a power as to be able to rescue *the prisoners of death*, and to recover the trophies of the all-conquering and devouring *grave.* And if we are true *believers*, let us learn to take our part in the triumph with a joyful assurance, that though we *putrify* in the dust, and *after the skin worms devour our bodies, yet in our flesh we shall* at length *see God.* (Job xix. 26.)

It was surely a happy time that succeeded all the lamentations of these affectionate mourners. With what mutual congratulations and unutterable endearments did *Lazarus* and *his sisters* behold each other! With what humble gratitude and adoration did they all prostrate themselves at the feet of their *Almighty Saviour!* But who can conceive the greater transports which shall

run through the whole redeemed world at the *resurrection day*, when piety and friendship shall be perfected, and those who were dearest to each other, both in the bonds of nature and of grace, shall spring up together to an immortal undivided life! In the mean time, let us *trust our friends with him* (with whom, if we are *Christians indeed*, we have trusted our souls,) believing that the separations he appoints are prudent and kind, and that even our prayers for their recovery are denied in mercy.

SECTION XXIX.

John xi. 47—57.

Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.—And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high-priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high-priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

Where shall we find such restless, such causeless, such incorrigible malice, as was in the hearts of these *rulers* against our blessed *Saviour?* What but Divine grace can reclaim men, when to have heard of the *resurrection of Lazarus* from their own friends and confidants, who had just been eye-witnesses of it, instead of conquering their hearts, served only to inflame their murderous rage!

This is an instance where we evidently *see the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness,*

that iniquity was there, (Eccles. iii. 16.) The *high-priest* lays down a most dangerous, though plausible, maxim, which is in effect no other than this, "That the *murder of* an innocent person by forms of law" which, (as *a noble sufferer* observed, is surely the worst kind of murder,) "nay, even of a person who by miracles demonstrated that he was an ambassador from God, was to be chosen, rather than by protecting and obeying him, to give umbrage to an earthly power, which seemed superior to their own." When will the *politicians* of this earth learn to *trust God* in his ways, rather than to trust themselves, and their own wisdom, in violation of all the rules of truth, honour, and conscience? Till then, like this foolish *ruler*, they will be *caught in their own craftiness;* and it is more than possible that they may, in many instances, hasten the very distress they are contriving to avoid. For this was here the event: the *Romans* (called therefore *the people of Messiah the Prince*, Dan. ix. 26.) were sent as executioners of the Divine vengeance, and the *Jews* were given up to a spirit of discord and madness, the terrible effects of which were such as cannot be read without horror, till *their place and nation were taken away;* nor could even the *Roman general* forbear declaring that the *hand of God* was apparent in their destruction.

Let us attend to this *Divine oracle* which God saw fit to put into the mouth of so wicked a man. *Jesus* has actually *died for the people, even for all the children of God that are scattered abroad.* His death is substituted instead of theirs; and by it they are *redeemed* and delivered, and shall ere long be *incorporated together*, and all the happy colony be raised to an abode of eternal glory. Blessed harvest, which springs up from redeeming blood! Heroic love of the dear Redeemer, which at the proper time brought him to *Jerusalem*, where he knew that *evil was determined against him!* Let us follow him, in a courageous adherence to God and our duty, in the midst of danger and opposition; and not wonder if we are set up as the marks of infamy and reproach, when we see *Jesus* marked out by a *public mandate*, as if he had been a robber or a murderer; and find so numerous and grand a *court of judicature* requiring their subjects to *seize* this most generous Friend of the whole world as the grand enemy of God and his country

SECTION XXX.

Luke ix. 51—62.

And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village.

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain *man* said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air *have* nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay *his* head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Who would not have imagined that the blessed *Jesus* should have been most cordially welcome wherever he came, when there was grace in all his words, and benevolence in all his actions? Yet these *Samaritans would not receive him* because he was a *Jew*. And thus do unhappy prejudices, taken up on imaginary grounds, against men, and things in the general, sometimes injure the best of men, and prove much more hurtful to the persons themselves by whom they are entertained.

The rash *disciples* would have *called for fire from heaven;* and let us observe how *Christ* treated the proposal. He treated it like himself; like the kind compassionate Friend of human nature; and also like one who well *knew what was in man*, (John i. 25,) and how little human terrors and severities can do towards producing a real conviction. Yet *fire from heaven* might have carried along with it some rational ground of conviction, which penal laws and sanguinary executions can never produce. What then would *Christ* have said to these *disciples* if they had themselves proposed to *smite with the sword*, or to *cast firebrands* into the house of these inhospitable men? Little do they *know their own spirit;* little do they understand either the true genius or the true interest of the gospel, who have recourse to such violent methods as these to extirpate heresy and to propagate truth. Let us bless God that neither the guilt nor misery of such a conduct is ours.

Let us learn to *search our own hearts*, that we may form a thorough acquaintance with ourselves; which will greatly promote both the comfort and usefulness of life. Especially let us attend to our aims and intentions, and be greatly jealous over our own hearts, lest we indulge our irregular passions under religious pretences, and set up the standards of malice and pride *in the name of the Lord.*

May no considerations of *ease* or *interest*, or even of human *friendship*, lead us to turn a deaf ear to the *calls of duty;* or suffer us, when we once have *engaged in his service*, to think of *deserting it*, lest on the whole we should be judged *unfit for the kingdom of God!* May thy grace, O *Lord*, animate our souls, that nothing may prevent our *faithfulness unto death*, and so deprive us of that *crown of life* which thy grace has promised to such a character! (Rev. ii. 10.)

SECTION XXXI.

Luke x. 1—16.

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly *is* great, but the labourers *are* few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip,

nor shoes; and salute no man by the way. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace *be* to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, That the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

So unwilling was the *blessed Jesus* to give over his kind attempts for men's salvation! He projected *another circuit* through the country, and sends forth *other messengers*, more numerous than the former company. He renews his *invitations* to perishing sinners, and his *lamentations* over those, who had hitherto *rejected the counsel of God against themselves.* (Luke vii. 30.) Thus let us love the souls of men; thus let us use repeated endeavours to deliver them; endeavours which would probably be much more successful than they are, if these wise and gracious directions of *Christ* to his *ministers* were more attentively observed by those who are honoured with that important office.

Let all such *cast their care upon God;* let them *go forth* cheerfully in a dependence on his protection and favour; let them carry about with them hearts full of affection for the whole human race, seeking and praying for the *peace* of all around them; cheerfully *contenting themselves with such things as they have*, (Heb. xiii. 5;) and neither pursuing the grandeurs nor the delicacies of life with any eager attachment.

Send forth, O Lord, such *labourers into thine harvest*, and animate them to a becoming zeal in their work, by a deep sense of that dreadful *condemnation*, which *those* will incur, who *despising them*, pour contempt on their *Divine Master*, and *his heavenly Father*, in whose name he was *sent!* May God preserve *our country* from that guilt and ruin! *The kingdom of God is come nigh unto* us, and we are *lifted up to heaven* by our privileges: may we not, after all, *be cast down to hell* for the abuse of them! but may Divine grace make such a way for the gospel *into our hearts*, that we may cordially *receive* all who faithfully proclaim it, and *bid them welcome in the name of the Lord!*

SECTION XXXII.

Luke x. 17—24.

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and *he* to whom the Son will reveal *him*. And he turn-

ed him unto *his* disciples, and said privately, Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen *them;* and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard *them.*

And are not *our obligations* in some measure proportionable to *theirs*, while these glorious sights are reflected to *our eyes* from the mirror of his word, and these glad tidings are echoed back *to our ears?* Have not *we* also reason to adore the peculiar favour of God to us, and to admire the *sovereignty* of his love, that he has been pleased to *reveal his Son* in us, and has given to such *babes*, as we must own ourselves to be, that spiritual knowledge of him, which he has suffered to remain *hidden* from the great, the learned, and the wise! *Even so, Father*, must we also say, *for so it seemed good in thy sight:* thou *hast mercy on whom thou wilt have mercy*, and often exaltest the riches of thy grace by the meanness and unworthiness of those, on whom it is bestowed.

Have we reason to hope that our worthless *names* are *written in heaven?* let us often think of that glorious society, amongst whom we are enrolled as members, and *rejoice* in the thought of those privileges, which result from such a relation to it: *privileges* in comparison of which, a power to *heal diseases*, and *eject demons* with a word, would hardly deserve our *joy*. In a grateful sense of them, let us adore the grace which gave us a place in the *Lamb's book of life*, and be ever solicitous to behave in a manner worthy of so illustrious a hope.

We have great encouragement to expect that he, before whom *Satan fell like lightning from heaven,* will enable us finally to *trample on his power*. Let us not servilely fear that condemned criminal, already marked with the scars of the Divine vengeance; but let us cheerfully hope, that the triumph over him will be renewed by the preaching of the gospel. Quickened by that hope, let us more earnestly pray, that the ruin of his gloomy kingdom may be daily more and more apparent, especially among us; that our gracious *Redeemer*, who reckons the interests of souls his own, have renewed reason of *joy* and *praise* on that account. Exert, O blessed *Jesus*, thine own almighty arm for that great purpose; and, as *thou alone* canst do it, *reveal thine heavenly Father* to those who, by neglecting *thee*, shew that they *know not him!*

SECTION XXXIII.

Luke x. 25—37.

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

And Jesus answering said, A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place came and looked *on him*, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion *on him*, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two-pence, and gave *them* to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Of how great importance is it, that we should every one of us be in good earnest making this inquiry, which the *Scribe* ad-

dressed to our *Lord*, *What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life!* What ought we not willingly to do, and to bear, that we may secure so great a felicity? Still will *our Lord* answer us from his word, that we must *keep the commands of God*, while we are looking to *him* as *the end of the law for righteousness.* (Rom. x. 4.) Happy are they that faithfully *do it*, that through the grace manifested in the gospel *they may have a right to eat of the tree of life!* (Rev. xxii. 14.)

May this abstract and summary of the commandments be *written* as it were in golden characters, *on the table* of each of *our hearts!* May we *love the Lord our God with all* the united powers and faculties of *our souls* and *our neighbour as* sincerely and fervently as *ourselves!* And may we learn from this beautiful *parable* of the *good Samaritan*, to exercise our charity to our fellow-creatures in the most amiable manner!

The *Jewish Priest* and *Levite* had, no doubt, the ingenuity to find out some excuse or other for *passing over to the other side;* and might perhaps, formally thank God for their own deliverance, while they left *their brother* to bleed to death for want of their assistance. Is it not an emblem of many living characters, perhaps of some, whose *sacred office* lays them under the strongest obligations to distinguished benevolence and generosity? But the *good Samaritan* acted the part of *a brother* to this expiring *Jew. O seed of Israel, O house of Levi* and of *Aaron!* will not the day come, when the human virtues of *heathens* shall *rise up in judgment* against thee!

Let us reflect with shame, what are the *differences* between one *Christian* and another, when compared with those between a *Samaritan* and a *Jew!* Yet here the *benevolence* of a good heart overcame even these; and, on the view of a wounded dying man, forgot that he was by nation *an enemy.* Whose *heart* does not *burn within him*, whose *eyes* do not overflow with *tears of delight*, while he reads such a story? Let us *go and do likewise*, regarding every man as *our neighbour* who needs our assistance. Let us exclude every malignant sentiment of *bigotry* and *party zeal* which would contract our hearts into an insensibility for all the human race, but a little select number, whose sentiments and practices are so much our own, that our love to them is but *self love* reflected. With an honest openness of mind let us always remember the *relation* between man and man, and feel and cultivate that happy *instinct* by which God, who has *formed our hearts* in many instances *alike*, has in the original constitution of our nature strongly and graciously bound them to each other.

SECTION XXXIV.

Luke x. 38—42.

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha, received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

So steadily and zealously did *our blessed Lord* pursue his work, with such unwearied diligence and constant affection! No sooner is he *entered into the house* of this pious friend, but he sets himself to preach the word of salvation, and is the same in the *parlour* which he had been in the *temple*. O *Mary*, how delightful was thy situation! Who would not rather have *sat* with thee *at the feet of Jesus*, to *hear his wisdom*, than have filled *the throne* of the greatest prince upon earth! *Blessed* were *thine eyes* in what they saw, *thine ears* in what they heard, and *thine heart* in what it received and embraced, and treasured up as *food*, which would *endure to everlasting life!*

How unhappily was her good *sister* deprived of the entertainment of these golden moments, while *hurried* about meats and drinks, and tables with their furniture, till she lost, not only her *opportunity*, but her *temper* too; as it is indeed hard to preserve it, without a resolute guard, amidst the crowd and clamour of domestic cares! Happy that *mistress* of a numerous family, who can manage its concerns with the meekness and composure of *wisdom*, and adjust its affairs in such a manner, as that it may not exclude the pleasures of *devotion*, and cut her off from the means of religious improvement! Happy the *man* who, in a pressing variety of secular business, is not so *cumbered* and *careful* as to forget that *one thing*, which is absolutely *needful;* but resolutely chooses *this better part*, and retains it as the

only secure and everlasting treasure! Oh that this comprehensive and important sentence were ever before our eyes! Oh that it were inscribed deep into our hearts! *One thing is needful.* And what is this *one thing*, but the care of the soul? what but an humble attention to the voice and the gospel of *Christ?* Yet, as if *this* were of all things the most unnecessary, for what poor trifling *care* is it not commonly forgot? yea, to what worthless *vanity* is it not daily sacrificed?

Let the *ministers of Christ*, let the friends of souls in every station, exert themselves, that all about them may be awakened duly to regard this great interest; accounting it *their meat* and *their drink* to promote it. Let them be always solicitous, that neither they nor others may neglect it for the hurries of too busy a life, or even for the services of an over-officious friendship.

SECTION XXXV.

Luke xi. 1—13.

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him: and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: The door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And

I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if *he ask* a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Well does this petition become every *disciple of Christ; Lord, teach us to pray!* Thou hast taught us by thine example, and by the precepts of thy word; teach us also by thine Holy Spirit! Excellent is this *form of sound* and Divine words, which our great Master here recommends. God forbid, that any of his followers should censure their brethren, who think it still proper to use it, not only as a *directory*, but as a form too, though perhaps with some little variation from the *original sense* of some clauses of it. Let us attentively study it, that, concise and expressive as it is, our thoughts may go along with its several *petitions*.

Let us learn to reverence and love God, and to consider ourselves as *brethren* in his family. Let the glory of *his name*, and the prosperity of *his kingdom*, be much dearer to us than any separate interest of our own. Let it be our cordial desire that *his will* may be universally obeyed, and with the most entire consent of soul acquiesced in, by all his creatures, both *in heaven* and *on earth*. Let our appetites and passions be so moderated, that *having* even the plainest *food and raiment we may be therewith content:* and, on the other hand, how plentiful soever our circumstances may be, let us remember, that *day by day* we depend on God for our *daily bread*. Nor do we need even the most necessary supplies of life more than we need *daily pardon;* to which therefore we should be putting in our constant claim, heartily *forgiving all our brethren*, as we desire to be *forgiven by God*. Conscious of our own weakness, let us, as far as we can, endeavour to avoid circumstances of *temptation;* and when necessarily led into them, let us be looking up to heaven for support; labouring above all things to preserve our integrity, and to maintain a *conscience void of offence*.

Depending on the certainty of these gracious *promises*, and encouraged by the *experience* of so many thousands, who have

on *asking received*, and on *seeking found*, let us renew our importunate addresses to the throne of Divine grace; and, remembering the *compassion* of our *heavenly Father*, let us be emboldened, in the *full assurance of faith*, to ask every necessary blessing, especially the communication of that enlightening and sanctifying *Spirit*, without which our corrupt hearts will find out a ready way to abuse the choicest of his providential favours to the dishonour of his holy name, and the deeper wounding of our own miserable souls.

SECTION XXXVI.

Luke xi. 14—36.

And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. And others, tempting *him*, sought of him a sign from heaven. But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house *divided* against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast *them* out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth *it* swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh *to him* seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter

in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first.

And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed *is* the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather blessed *are* they that hear the word of God and keep it.

And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign: and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet: for as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation. The queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon *is* here. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth *it* in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when *thine eye* is evil, thy body also *is* full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore *be* full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

Whose heart does not echo back the *exclamation* of *this* pious *woman?* Yet who does not too frequently forget that weighty and important *answer* which succeeded it? Let us not only *hear*, but *keep the word of Christ;* and we shall thus be *happy* in a nearer *union* with him than ever could arise from any *natural relation* to him, and shall ere long have opportunities of more noble and more delightful converse with him than those, with which *the Virgin Mary* herself was honoured during the time of his abode on earth.

Still does *the light* of his divine instructions shine with the brightest *lustre*, and diffuse itself around us! Let us open the *eyes* of our mind with *singleness* and *simplicity* to receive it; and make it our care to act according to it. *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord*, (Hosea vi. 3,) and thus with cheerfulness shall we reap the fruit of a *well-informed mind* and a *well-regulated life!*

May we be delivered from all those *false maxims* which would *darken our hearts* amidst all this *meridian lustre*, and turn our boasted *light* into *darkness?* Would to God there were not renewed instances of this kind continually occurring among us; and that we did not daily meet with persons whose *pretended wisdom* teaches them to forget or despise *the gospel*, and to serve only to *amuse their eyes*, while it *leads their feet to the chambers of death!*

SECTION XXXVII.

Luke xi. 37—54.

And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw *it*, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, aad pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.—Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over *them* are not aware *of them*.

Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also. And he

said, Woe unto you also, *ye* lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.

Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in, ye hindered.

And as he said these things unto them, the Scribes and Pharisees began to urge *him* vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; and such were the reproofs of *Christ* on this occasion. How well had all the entertainments of the *Pharisee's* table been repaid, had he and his brethren heard them with candour, humility, and obedience! These men despised them to *their ruin;* let us often review them for our instruction, that none of these dreadful *woes* may come upon us.

This discourse of *our Lord* is a most just and severe rebuke to every *hypocritical* professor, who is scrupulous and exact in matters of *ceremony*, while he neglects *morality;* and is studious to shine in the sight of men, while he forgets the all-penetrating eye of God. It exposes the *ostentation* of those who pride themselves in empty *titles of honour*, and eagerly affect *precedence* and *superiority*. And it evidently chastises those who *press on others* the duties they *neglect themselves*, and so are most righteously *judged out of their own mouth*.

How melancholy it is to observe, in instances like these, this *hypocrisy* and deceitfulness of the human heart, and its desperate and unfathomable wickedness! and to see how men impose upon themselves with empty appearances like these *Pharisees:* who *built the sepulchres of the* former *prophets*, while they were *persecuting* those of their own day; and, in contempt of all that was said by the messengers of God, were *filling up the measure of their iniquities*, till the cloud which had been so long gathering, burst on their heads, and poured forth a storm of aggravated wrath and ruin!

May that God, who has an immediate access to the hearts of men, deliver all *christian* countries, and especially all *protestant* churches, from such *teachers* as are here described: who *take away* and secrete *the key of knowledge* instead of using it, and *obstruct*, rather than promote men's *entrance* into the kingdom of heaven! How loud will *the blood* of the souls they have betrayed cry against them in the awful day of accounts! and how little will the *wages of unrighteousness*, and the rewards of worldly policy, be able to warn them against *destruction*, or to support them under it!

SECTION XXXVIII.

Luke xii. 1—12.

In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops.

And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is

forgotten before God. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows. Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and *unto* magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

Let us from this discourse, which we have been reading, learn the *folly of hypocrisy*, as well as the *wickedness* of it. *A lying tongue is but for a moment*, (Prov. xii. 19;) and the great approaching *judgment-day* will shew all in their true colours. May we live as those, who are then to be *made manifest!* May the *leaven* of deceit, by Divine grace, be entirely purged out of our hearts; and all our conduct be so fair and equal, that it may appear more honourable and lovely, in proportion to the accuracy with which it is examined; as the whitest garments are recommended by being seen in the strongest light!

If we would preserve such an integrity of soul, let us endeavour to get above the servile *fear of man; of man, that shall die, and of the son of man, that shall be made as grass; as if the oppressor* had us in his power, and *were ready to destroy; and where is the fury of the oppressor?* (Isa. li. 12, 13) With what infinite ease can God restrain it; and when it is let loose in all its violence, how little can it do to hurt his faithful servants! Let this mean passion be over-awed by *the fear of* that *God*, who has *our eternal all* in his hands; whose vengeance, or favour, will reach far beyond the grave, and determine our final misery or felicity, as we are the objects of the one or the other.

While we are in the world, let us labour after a firm faith in the *universality of Divine Providence:* from which *the least* of his *creatures* are not exempted, nor are they forgotten by it. Let us endeavour to enjoy the pleasures and comfort of such a thought; assuring ourselves that He, who regards the life of *birds* and of *insects*, will not neglect the care and preservation of *his children.*

In a steady persuasion of this, let us determine courageously to *confess* and maintain his gospel in the extremest danger; knowing that thus only we shall secure the honour of being *owned by Christ*, amidst all the glories of his final appearance.

And, in a word, to animate us to this holy courage, and to assist us in every other duty, let us earnestly pray for the *Holy Spirit;* by whose influence the *apostles* were instructed and supported in the discharge of their difficult and various offices; whose *grace* therefore must be abundantly *sufficient for us*, to cause us *to abound in every good word and work.* (2 Cor. ix. 8.)

SECTION XXXIX.

Luke xii. 13—21.

And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he posesseth.

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Most prudently did *our Lord* decline the invidious office of an *arbitrator* in civil affairs; and wisdom will require his *ministers* generally to avoid it likewise. It is more suitable to our office, like our blessed Master, to endeavour to draw off and disen-

gage the minds of men from *covetousness*, and to pluck up the root of those eager *contentions*, which so often divide even the *nearest relations*, and inspire them with mutual aversion, more invincible *than the bars of a castle*. (Prov. xviii. 19.)

And that a *covetous desire* of the enjoyments of the world may not create *contentions*, and engage us in pursuits that will be fatal to our souls, let us seriously consider the true value of things, and reflect how little *riches* can do to make us *happy* if we obtain them; and how very uncertain that *life* is, on the continuance of which our possession of them does so evidently depend. But, alas, how many are there, who are now as deeply engaged in their worldly schemes, as this *rich fool* in the *parable*, to whom God will, in a weeks, or days, if not *this very night*, say, by the awful voice of his irresistible providence, *Thy soul is required of thee!* And then, what will all these treasures do to purchase *life*, or to allay the agonies of *death?* So far will they be found from being capable of this, that they will rather serve to increase and imbitter the surprise and anguish of those agonies.

Let it then be our labour and care that we may be *rich towards God;* rich in works of piety and charity. So shall we safely consign over *our treasure* to the bank of heaven, and shall be *enriched* by it, when we leave the world as *naked* as we entered upon it, and lose all but what has been so wisely and happily spent.

SECTION XL.

Luke xii. 22—34.

And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body *is more* than raiment. Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have store-house nor barn; and God feedeth them: How much more are ye better than the fowls! And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then

God so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven: how much more *will he clothe* you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Are we not all conscious to ourselves, that on such topics as these, we need *line upon line, and precept upon precept*, as being too deficient in our *regard*, though *God spake once, yea twice?* (Job xxxiii. 14.) We see our heavenly Father *crowning the earth with his goodness:* to this day does he *clothe the grass and the flowers* with the same profusion of ornament! to this day does he *feed the young ravens when they cry*, (Psalm cxlvii. 9,) nor is the meanest species of *insects* perished. Still does he *know our necessities;* and still he addresses us in the same gracious language, and avows the same endearing paternal relation. The experience of his power, goodness, and fidelity, is increasing with every succeeding generation, with every revolving day. The *life* that he has given, is supported by his care; and the same hand that formed *the body*, nourishes and clothes it. Let us then *cast all our care on him*, as being persuaded that he *careth for us.* (1 Peter v. 7.) Feeble as his *little flock* is, *it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom;* and we are unworthy of our share in so glorious a hope, if we cannot trust him for inferior blessings, and refer it to him to judge, in what manner our present wants are to be supplied.

Let the *heathens* abandon themselves to these low *anxieties;* but as for us, let us *thank God, and take courage*, opening our hearts wide to every sentiment of *faith* in God, and *charity* to men; and while we have this inexhaustible *bank* to draw upon, let us be *rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate*, so *laying up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life!* (1 Tim. vi. 18, 19,) the very hope and expectation of which, if

our heart be set upon it, will give us incomparably sweeter delight than the securest possessions of this empty world, and the most ample magazines of its richest stores.

SECTION XLI.

Luke xii. 35—48.

Let your loins be girded about, and *your* lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed *are* those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, That he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* lord shall make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not *for him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant which knew his lord's

will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*, for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more.

May our souls be awakened by these awful truths! and may we be engaged *to gird up the loins of our mind, to be sober, and, watch to the end!* (1 Peter i. 13.)

Great are our encouragements to *diligence*, on the one hand; and, on the other, dreadful will be the punishment of our *neglect*. The time of *our Lord's appearance* is uncertain; let us therefore *always be ready;* solicitous that, when he comes, he may *find us so doing*, as he has required: *living not to ourselves, but to him*, and employing ourselves about *that particular thing*, whatsoever it may be, which, all circumstances considered, we are verily persuaded, may most promote the great ends of life, and the important purposes of his glory.

How glorious are the *rewards* promised to such! How justly may they awaken our emulation! He will *prefer them* to stations of more honourable and important service. He will *set them down at his table*, and *minister* (as it were) *himself* to their delight, bringing forth the choicest dainties of heaven, and spreading before them an eternal banquet. *Lord*, may we, through thy grace, be found worthy to *taste of that supper!* May *the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne feed us, and guide us to fountains of living waters!* (Rev. vii. 17.)

On the other hand, let us seriously consider the *punishments* to be inflicted on the *unfaithful servant*. Let *ministers*, if such there are, who abandon themselves to a life of *idleness* and *luxury;* who stain their sacred character by *intemperance;* who proudly *censure their brethren*, and either call, or wish, for *the secular arm* to *smite their fellow-servants*, perhaps more faithful than themselves; let such hear and tremble. Their *Lord* may *come* in a very *unexpected hour;* (as indeed, when do such expect him?) and what are *the stripes* they have given others, when compared with those which they shall themselves receive? *stripes* which shall *cut them asunder*, and pierce deep into their very souls! How much *more tolerable* will it be, even for the worst of *Gentile sinners*, than for such!

Let all who are in any measure distinguished by the gifts of the Divine bounty to them, or by their stations, whether in *civil* or *sacred offices*, attentively dwell on this great truth, so solemnly repeated again and again; let them consider it with a view to their own account: *To whomsoever much is given, of him will*

much be required. May Divine Grace so impress it on their hearts, that they may be distinguished by present *fidelity*, and future *rewards*, in proportion to the difference, which Providence has already made in their favour! And may they never have reason to reflect with confusion and anguish on what is now their honour and their joy!

SECTION XLII.

Luke xii. 49—59.

I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled. But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when *ye see* the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. *Ye* hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, *as thou art* in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

To what a lamentable degree is human nature corrupted, that so noble a remedy as the *gospel*, so well adapted to the cure of a malevolent and contentious disposition, should in so many instances only imitate the disease! and that a scheme so full of love and goodness, and so well suited to promote *peace* and harmony in those, who cordially embrace it, should be opposed with all the violence of persecution, and be the means of introducing strife and *division!*

How monstrous is it, that any should *hate their neighbours*, yea, and their nearest *relatives*, for that disinterested piety, and regard to conscience, which might recommend *strangers* to their esteem and affection! Yet let not those, who meet with such injurious treatment, be discouraged; knowing they have a *Father* and a *Saviour* in heaven, whose love is ten thousand times more than all: nor let others be offended; as if *Christianity* had been the occasion of more *evil* than *good;* for such is the nature of eternity, that the salvation of one immortal soul will be more than an equivalent for the greatest and most lasting temporal evils, which the greatest number of persons can suffer for conscience sake

Let this awaken our *zeal to save souls*, however great and terrible the sufferings are, to which it may expose us, in proportion to the *rage*, with which the enemy is endeavouring their *destruction.* May we be animated in it by the example of the blessed *Jesus*, who, with a view to this, even *longed for those sufferings*, which innocent nature could not but regard as the object of strong aversion!

May we at all times be so wise as to *discern* the evidences, and to comply with the purposes, of the *gospel*, else our *knowledge in natural things*, should it extend not only to the most common, but the most curious *appearances* on the *face of the earth* or *the heavens*, will turn to no other account but to shame and condemn us!

If we have any reason to fear that, through obstinate impenitence, the blessed *God* is still an *adversary* to us, let us make it our first and greatest care, that, by an humble submission of soul to him in the methods of his *gospel grace*, that strict scrutiny of his justice may be prevented, and that sentence of his wrath averted, which would otherwise plunge us into *endless ruin and misery;* for when could we pretend to have *paid the last farthing* of the debt of *ten thousand talents*, which we have been daily contracting, and which is charged to our account in the *book of his remembrance?*

SECTION XLIII.

LUKE XIII. 1—9.

THERE were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

He spake also this parable: A certain *man* had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung *it:* And if it bear fruit, *well;* and if not, *then* after that thou shalt cut it down.

Which of us may not learn a lesson for himself from this instructive *parable* of the *fig tree?* Have we not long been *planted in God's vineyard*, and favoured with the cultivation of his ordinances, yea, with the dews of his grace too; and yet how little *fruit* have we borne in proportion to those advantages? How long has he *come seeking it* in vain, while we have frustrated the most reasonable expectations, perhaps not only for *three*, but several of us for more than *thirty years?* Wonderful is it, that the dreadful *sentence* has not long since gone forth against us, *Cut them down, why cumber they the ground?* We owe it to the *intercession* of our blessed *Redeemer*, the Great *Keeper* of the *garden of God*, that this has not long since been our case. *Let us not be high-minded but fear!* (Rom. xi. 20.) Let *barren sinners* reflect, that this may be *the last year*, perhaps indeed the *last month*, or *last day* of their trial: for even now also is *the ax*

laid to the root of the tree! (Matt. iii. 10.) And let them remember, that though *there be hope of a tree, when it is cut down, that it may sprout again*, (Job xiv. 7,) yet, when the doom is executed on them, *their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will go up like dust*, (Isa. v. 24;) and *every tree which brings not forth good fruit*, will be *hewn down, and cast into the fire.*

Let such therefore meditate *terror*, when *the Judgments of God are abroad in the earth;* and, when others are overwhelmed in ruin, let them not harshly censure the sufferers, as if they were *greater sinners than* any *others;* but let them apply that salutary, though awful *admonition* to their own souls, repeating it again and again, till they are *pricked to the heart* by it, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

Terrible indeed was the case of those, *whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices*, and of those who were dashed to pieces in a moment by the *fall of Siloam's tower;* but infinitely more dreadful will be the condition of them, that *fall into the hands of the living God*, (Heb. x. 31,) especially of those deceivers, who, having surrounded his altars with the hypocritical forms of devotion, shall themselves be made the victims of his justice, and be crushed by the resistless weight of his almighty vengeance.

SECTION XLIV.

Luke xiii. 10—21.

And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up *herself*. And when Jesus saw her, he called *her to him*, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid *his* hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day. The Lord then answered him, and said, *Thou* hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or *his* ass from the stall, and lead *him* away to watering? And ought not this woman, being

a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day? And when he had said these things all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

Again do we see, in a very instructive instance, the power and goodness of *Christ*. It wrought on a poor despised creature; but *our Lord* considered her as *a daughter of Abraham*, and honoured, even in her, whatever traces of her father *Abraham's* faith and piety his penetrating eye might discern. Her zeal and willingness to attend on public worship brought her out, though she *could not stand upright*, and had probably in that respect a much better excuse for staying at home than many could make, who now often absent themselves from the much nobler services of the *Christian* sanctuary.

She met with *Christ* in the *synagogue*, and returned with a *cure*. And oh, how many, as the effect of such a pious zeal, though they have not been *loosed from their infirmities*, have at least been greatly strengthened to bear them.

Our Lord says that *Satan had bound her*. That malignant enemy to our bodies and souls rejoices in any opportunity of hurting either. But it is pleasing to think, that his power is always under the controul of *Christ;* and therefore shall never be exercised on his people any farther than their gracious *Redeemer* sees it consistent with their good, and will take care to render it subservient to it.

How gravely does this *ruler of the synagogue* instruct the people in a point of ceremony, while his heart was full of enmity to *Christ*, and hardened against every sentiment of human compassion! Justly was his *hypocrisy* confounded and exposed.

We should with pleasure see this *Sun of Righteousness* thus victoriously breaking through those clouds, which envy and malice had raised to obscure him, and diffusing his sacred light from one end of the heavens to the other. With pleasure should we view the accomplishment of these *parables*, which represent the

success of *his gospel* as so great; and we should daily pray, with increasing earnestness, that all the remaining nations and *kingdoms of this world* may at length *become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ:* and sincere converts flock to him from every side, even *as doves to their windows!* (Rev. xi 15, and Isaiah lx. 8.)

SECTION XLV.

Luke xiii. 22—35.

And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying towards Jerusalem. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all *ye* workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and *from* the west, and from the north, and *from* the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-

morrow, and the *day* following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen *doth gather* her brood under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, ye shall not see me until the *time* come when ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

And who would not *welcome* such a *Saviour*, when he appears on so kind a design! who would not *bless him that cometh in the name of the Lord*, to *gather* our souls with the tenderest care and to shelter us from wrath and ruin! that *Saviour* whose *bowels yearned over us*, and whose *heart* poured forth its *blood* for us! Too many *reject him*, and will not hearken to the kindest calls of his compassionate voice. Unhappy creatures! *the time will come*, when they too late will be convinced of their fatal error.

Let each of us be solicitous for himself. Away with those *vain curiosities*, which serve only to amuse and distract our thoughts. Let us call, and fix them down to the great concerns of our own salvation: and, if we would secure it, let us prepare to encounter difficulties, and *strive*, as for our lives, to break through all the opposition of our enemies, and resolutely *to enter in at the strait gate*. How many have *sought it*, when *the door* has been *barred*? and how soon may the great *Master of the house arise* and *shut it* for ever against those who are yet trifling!

Let not *hypocrites* trust in vain words. *The workers of iniquity* shall be *disowned by Christ* at last, though they may have *eaten and drank in his presence*. But oh, who can express the disappointment, the rage, and despair, of those who fall from such towering *hopes*, and plunge, as from the very gates of heaven, into the lowest abyss of darkness and horror! Their hearts will endeavour to harden themselves in vain; their doleful cries shall be distinguished in that region of universal horror! but they shall not penetrate the regions of the blessed, nor interrupt the delight, with which even the dearest of their *pious relatives* shall *sit down in the kingdom of God*.

If we through grace have more substantial hopes, let us imitate the zeal and courage of our Divine Leader; and, whatever *threatenings* or *dangers* may oppose, let us go on *day after day*, till our work be done, and our souls at length *perfected in*

glory. But let us carefully distinguish between those things, in which *our Lord* meant himself as our *Pattern*, and those which were peculiar to his office as *a Prophet sent from God.* That extraordinary office justified him in using that *severity of language*, when speaking of *wicked princes* and *corrupt teachers*, to which we have no call; and by which we should only bring scandal on religion, and ruin on ourselves, while we irritated, rather than convinced or reformed, those whom we undertook so indecently to rebuke.

SECTION XLVI.

Luke xiv. 1—14.

And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath-day, that they watched him. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers, and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? And they held their peace. And he took *him*, and healed him, and let *him* go; and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath-day? And they could not answer him again to these things.

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any *man* to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him: and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room: that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou

makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor *thy* rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again. and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor. the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed: for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

How happy were they, who had frequent opportunities of conversing with *Christ* whose discourses were always so wise and so useful: how well did he repay all the entertainments he received, in the advantages which he gave for religious improvement! In vain might his enemies *watch* for occasions against him. *In his tongue was the law of wisdom* as well as of kindness. (Prov. xxxi. 26.) And surely *the lips* of his *ministers* and *disciples* would *feed many* to their everlasting benefit, were this blessed model to be more carefully traced! (Prov. x. 21.)

Let us particularly observe, what he here says concerning a *modest* and *humble deportment*, which is indeed the surest way to be *honoured* and respected. And let us take great heed, that *that good breeding*, which consists so much in the expressions of *humility* and readiness to prefer others to ourselves, do not degenerate into a mere form, and prove, as it too often does, the cloak of *arrogance* and *pride;* but that it have its foundation in a lowly opinion of ourselves, and an habitual disposition to submit even to our inferiors, when we may do it without breaking in upon the duties and decencies of life, and injuring those to whom it may be exercised, by an *indulgence* which they know not how to understand and improve.

Let us hearken to these exhortations to *charity* from the mouth of our charitable *Saviour*, who *gave himself for us.* And as *Christ pleased not himself* (Rom. xv. 3,) let us not allow ourselves to squander away great quantities of money, in what may gratify our own senses, or make a gaudy shew in the eyes of the vainer part of mankind; but let us be willing to spare from the luxuries and superfluities of life, that we may bestow it on the *poor* and *distressed.* And indeed, whatever our circumstances and possessions be, we must expect that the stream of our *bounty* will soon be dried up, if it be not supplied from the fountain of a prudent *frugality.* This *self-denial* may now in some instances be painful; but it will be amply *recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* May we then meet with many, whom our liberality has fed and clothed, whom our knowledge and zeal have instructed, and whom our holy example have

edified and quickened! Here will be a foundation laid for the endearments of an *eternal friendship;* when that which has been formed upon a partnership in vice, or animal pleasure, shall be for ever forgotten, or be remembered with mutual horror.

SECTION XLVII.

Luke xiv. 15—24.

And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed *is* he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the high-ways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

May the infinite mercy of God forbid, that this should ever be our condition? The *gospel feast*, like the sumptuous banquet of *Ahasuerus* (Esth. i. 3, 4,) is of a very *long standing;* not only from week to week but from age to age, God is sending to *invite new guests:* and, after all the millions that have been regaled by it, and nourished up to everlasting life, *there is yet*

room for more. Still are *his servants* sent from one time to another, with all the fervor of the most affectionate persuasion, to *urge sinners to* accept of these desirable blessings! (for such only is the *compulsion* that becomes a feast, and suits the nature of reasonable creatures.) May we not *receive the grace of God in vain!* May we not *perish*, as thousands before us have done by *making light of the gospel!*

It has often been observed from this *parable*, that they were *lawful occasions* which these unhappy people pleaded as their *excuse* for neglecting the invitation. And how many perish by what is indeed *lawful!* But the care of our *estates* or *cattle*, our *domestic affairs*, and our dearest *relatives*, will be destructive to us, if they be minded as our *main care*, and our hearts be so attentive to them as to forget the *one thing needful.*

Are we of the number of those who, though once blinded, impoverished and enfeebled by sin, and now brought as welcome guests to the *table*, which Divine love has spread? Let us adore the grace which *openeth the door* to us, and *opened our hearts* to comply with the call; by its strong and powerful though rational and gentle influence, *compelling us to come in.* Let the *servants* employed in the message *urge* it with a becoming earnestness; as well knowing, how much the heart of their *great master* is in it, and how much the happiness of *souls* depends on their accepting it. *Lord!* may we see thy *table furnished with guests*, and ourselves be so *happy* as finally to partake of those blessings, to which we are now *commanded* to *invite others!* For *blessed* indeed *are they, who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!*

SECTION XLVIII.

Luke xiv. 25—35.

And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have *sufficient* to finish *it?* lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and

was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt *is* good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; *but* men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

May our most serious *attention* be fixed on so important a truth; and may this plain and candid declaration of *our Lord* be duly regarded by us, as ever we desire to find the advantage of that relation to him in which we are so ready to glory! If we would not be *cast out* with disdain, and *trampled under foot* as worthless and vile, let us be solicitous that there may be *the salt* of Divine grace in our hearts; and let us undertake a religious profession with that deliberate *consideration*, which becomes a matter of such great importance. A hasty purpose will never bear us through the difficulties we must expect to encounter; and rash vows and thoughtless adventures, in this case, will only expose us to the *derision of others*, and the keener remorse of our own minds.

Nor is the nature and evidence of *religion* such as to have any reason to fear the severest examination. The demands of *Christ* are indeed high; that the nearest *relatives* should be abandoned, and even *life itself* sacrificed *for his sake;* that we be at least *martyrs* in resolution, and have so much of a reciprocal affection for him, as shall, like his *love* to us, be *stronger than death.* Yet how reasonable is the demand! Did he leave *his Father's bosom* for us, and shall we scruple to abandon our *houses* and our *kindred* for him? Did he expire on *the cross* for us, and shall not we be ready to *take up our crosses and follow him?* Shall it not be delightful to us to trace his most painful steps, and by the most costly sacrifices to approve our gratitude and our duty?

Blessed *Jesus, lead us!* and by thy grace *we will follow thee*, whatever be the path, whatever be the burden, whatever the terror of the way; knowing that if we partake with thee in *thy sufferings*, we shall at length share with thee in thy consolation and *thy glory!* (2 Tim. ii. 12.)

SECTION XLIX.

Luke xv. 1—10.

Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he called together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me: for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it?* And when she hath found *it*, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

How graceful and lovely does *our Lord* appear, while thus opening his compassionate arms and heart, to these wretched *outcasts, for whose souls no man cared!* Who can choose but *rejoice* at this *jubilee*, which he proclaimed among them, and at the cheerful *attention* which they gave to these *glad tidings of great joy?* May we, who are his followers, never *despise* the meanest or the worst of men, when they seem disposed to receive religious instruction; but rather exert ourselves with a distinguished zeal, as knowing that *the joy* of the *heavenly* world in their recovery will be in some measure proportionable to the extremity of their former danger.

Let us often recollect the charity and goodness of those *per-*

fected spirits, who look down from their own glory with compassion on mortals wandering in the *paths of the destroyer*, and who sing anthems of thankfulness and joy, when by Divine grace they are reclaimed from them. Let every sinner be touched with a generous desire, that he who has been in so many instances the offence and *burden of the earth*, may become the *joy of heaven* by his sincere conversion. And let the *solicitude* with which the little possessions of *this world* are sought, when they are *lost* by any accident, engage us more earnestly to seek what is infinitely more valuable, our own *salvation*, and that of the immortal souls of others. May we in our different stations labour successfully for their *recovery;* that we may another day share in that higher *joy* which *angels* and glorified *saints* shall express, when they see them not only reduced to the paths of virtue and happiness, but fixed in abodes of eternal glory!

SECTION L.

Luke xv. 11—32.

And he said, a certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth *to me*. And he divided unto them *his* living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger; I will arise and go to my father; and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck,

and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the Father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it;* and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It is meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Let us here behold, with all due attention, the moving representation which our gracious *Redeemer* makes of the *folly of sinners*, and the *compassions of God:* compassions, which he describes, as one who himself felt them, and who in this respect, as well as others, was *the express image of his Father.*

We have before us in this *parable* a lively emblem of the character and condition of *sinners* in their fallen state. They are thus impatient of the most necessary *restraints*, thus fondly conceited of their *own wisdom;* and thus, when enriched by the bounties of the great common *Father*, do they ungratefully run from him, and say unto God, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* (Job. xxi. 14.) Sensual *pleasures*

are eagerly sought; and perhaps all their earthly possessions and hopes are quickly paid as the price of them. While the means of obtaining these pleasures continue, not *a serious thought* of God can find a place in their minds: and then, perhaps, *afflictions*, heavy and complicated afflictions, come upon them; yet even under that pressure they will often make very *hard shifts* before they will be persuaded to think of a return; till at length Divine grace, working in concurrence with Providence, brings them to a better temper.

When they see themselves naked and indigent, enslaved and undone; when they *come to themselves*, and recover the exercise of their reason, improving it to the only purposes for which it would have been worth while to have received it;—then they feel the pangs of *penitential remorse;* then they remember the *blessings* they have lost, and attend to the misery they have incurred. And hereupon they are disposed humbly to confess their folly, and to prostrate themselves in the presence of their *heavenly Father*,—they put the resolution immediately into practice; *they arise and go* unto him.

But oh, let us behold with wonder and pleasure the *gracious reception* they find from divine injured goodness! He *sees them afar off;* he *pities*, he *meets*, and *embraces* them; he interrupts their complaints and acknowledgments with tokens of his returning favour. *Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.* (Jer. xxxi. 23.) Thus does God welcome the humble *penitent:* thus does he open the arms of his love to embrace him, and the treasures of his bounty to enrich him. He arrays him with *the robe* of a *Redeemer's righteousness*, dresses him in the ornaments of *sanctifying grace*, honours him with the tokens of *adopting love*, and invests him with the glorious privileges and immunities of his *children.* And all this he does with unutterable *delight: he rejoices over him with joy; he rests in his love*, and, as it were, *rejoices over him with singing*, (Zeph. iii. 17;) and this is the joyful language of the song, My children *that were dead, are alive again;* and though they *were lost*, they *are found.*

Let heaven and earth unite in the *joy*, and echo back the song. Let no *elder brother* murmur at the *indulgence* with which these *prodigals* are treated; but rather welcome them back into the family, and even encourage every thing that looks like a disposition to return to it. And let those who have been thus received, wander no more: but rather let them emulate the strictest piety of those, who for *many years* have *served* their *heavenly Father*,

without having in any notorious instances *transgressed his commandments.*

SECTION LI.

Luke xvi. 1—18.

And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man which had a steward: And the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship: for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig: to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors *unto him*, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down, quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely, for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches?* And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the

one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets *were* until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband committeth adultery.

May *the wisdom* of *the children of this world* in their comparatively striking concerns excite a holy emulation in *the children of light!* Is it not much better worth our while to employ all the attention of our thoughts in observing opportunities for the good of our souls, and to exert all the force or our resolutions in improving them, than to *labor* merely for the *meat which perishes*, for that *deceitful mammon*, that treacherous *friend*, which will at best only amuse us for a few years, and will for ever forsake us in our greatest extremity.

Let us take occasion, from *this parable*, to think how soon we must part with all our present possessions; how soon we must *give an account* of our respective *stewardships* as those who must be *no longer stewards*. Let us therefore manage them in such a manner as may most effectually promote the great purposes of our everlasting happiness. To this end, let us remember how absolutely necessary it is that we abound in works of *charity* and *benevolence*, and that we endeavour to abstract our hearts from an over-eager attachment to these *lying vanities;* for surely the trifles of earth are no better. Let us not imagine that our particular address can find out the secret of *serving God and mammon*, since *Christ* represents it as an impossibility and contradiction.

May we be found *faithful* in what God has committed to us, whether it be *little* or *much*; but govern ourselves, not by the maxims of this vain world, and by those of the gospel! And if the same temper that led the *covetous Pharisees* to *deride our Lord*, engage the children of this world to pour contempt upon us as *visionaries* and *enthusiasts*, we have much greater reason to be grieved for them than for ourselves. Their censures can be matter of but little account to us, when we consider that the things

which are *highly esteemed by men* are often *an abomination in the sight of God.* His *law* is sacred, and the constitutions of his kingdom are *unalterable;* may the temper of our minds be so altered and disposed as may suit it! For another day, and another world, will shew that real *Christianity* is the only *wisdom;* and that all the refinements of human policy without it are but specious *madness* and laborious *ruin!*

SECTION LII.

Luke xvi. 19—34.

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried: And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that *would come* from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham:

but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Most evidently may we learn from *this parable*, that it is impossible to *know either love or hatred by any thing that is before us under the sun.* (Eccles. ix. 1.) Who that had seen the pomp and plenty of this *rich sinner*, and compared it with the indigence and misery of *Lazarus*, would have imagined that the latter had been *the child*, and the former *the enemy of God?* But let us *judge nothing before the time.* (1 Cor. iv. 5.) Our *Lord Jesus Christ* shews us the *period* of all the prosperity of the wicked, and of all the calamities with which good men may be exercised. And what availed the *luxuries of life*, or the magnificence of *burial*, to a wretch *tormented in flames?* Surely the fierceness of those *flames* would be proportionable to the *luxury* in which he had formerly lived, and the sense of his *torment* be heightened by the *delicacy* he had once indulged. May God awaken those unhappy persons, whatever their rank in the present life may be, who place their happiness and glory in being *clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day!* May they *lift up* their enchanted deluded *eyes*, and see that pointed *sword* of the Divine vengeance which is suspended over them by so weak a thread; and may they take this warning from one *greater than Moses and the prophets*, from one that *came from the dead* to enforce it, that they pass not *into that place of torment!*

Let *poor afflicted saints* take comfort in what has now been read, though they may be despised and slighted by men. The time will shortly come, when those *angels* who now descend in an invisible form to *minister to them*, will appear as their *guard* to convoy them to the regions of glory. *Abraham's bosom* will be opened to them, and the dainties of heaven be set before multitudes, who, perhaps, while on this side the grave, hardly knew how to procure even the necessaries of life.

May we never view those *seats of glory*, as this wretched *sensualist* did, at an *unapproachable distance!* Let us think seriously of his deplorable circumstances, when he asked *a drop of water* from *the tip of Lazarus' finger*, and yet was *denied.* Dreadful representation! yet made by *Christ* himself, who surely knew how to describe the case with the utmost propriety, Behold, O our souls, this *son of Abraham*, in that flaming prison, in all the restless agonies of torment and despair; and we may judge what dependence to place on a *descent from pious ancestors*, or a participation of external privileges.

We inquire not curiously into the *motives* which engaged him to request that so extraordinary a *warning* might be sent to *his*

brethren; whether it might proceed from a remainder of natural affection, from a fear of meeting them in the same misery, or from a mixture of both. It is enough to observe how and upon what principles it was denied, *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.* Let none vainly excuse themselves from believing the evidence of the *revelation* God has given, on a pretence that *if they saw signs and wonders they would believe.* The heart of man may be hardened against the most sensible and immediate miracle; but if that evidence were irresistible, it would ill become us to dictate to God when and to whom it should be given. Let us examine and acquiesce in such as he has seen fit to afford; and pass through our various scenes of life as those that have eternity in view, and are persuaded we must each of us, in a few years at farthest, be with *Lazarus in Abraham's bosom,* or with *the rich man in that* tormenting *flame.*

SECTION LIII.

Luke xvii. 1—10.

Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe *unto him,* through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith, as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not

rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Let us renew our guard against every thing in our conduct which might *give offence* to the meanest and *weakest;* and against every thing, which might by a bad example mislead others, or furnish the enemies of religion with matter of reproach and accusation against it. Let us imbibe the *forgiving* Spirit of the gospel, and bearing in mind the numberless instances in which God has forgiven us, though we have sinned against him *not only seven times, but seventy times seven;* let us *arm ourselves* in some degree *with the same mind*, and endeavour to *forbear, and forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake has* freely *forgiven us.* (Eph. iv. 32, and Col. iii. 13.)

In a sense of the weakness of our *faith* let us pray to *Christ* to *increase* it; and then those duties will be discharged with ease and delight, which appeared most difficult in a distant prospect. Yet when *faith* and *patience* have had their most *perfect work*, when our Master's will has been borne with the most entire submission and done with the most zealous despatch, let us not pretend to place any *merit* in our own actions or sufferings; but let us think of ourselves as the *servants* of God, yea, as *unprofitable servants*, whose *goodness extendeth not* to our Great Master: and to the riches of his grace let us ascribe it, that our feeble powers are strengthened to the performance of our duty; and that our worthless services are accepted, and the numberless deficiencies of them mercifully excused.

SECTION LIV.

Luke xvii. 11—19.

And it came to pass as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on *his* face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said nnto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

From the story of the *ten lepers* let us learn importunately to seek the influences of *Christ*, to purge us from that far more odious and fatal disease which sin has spread over our whole nature; and, after the example of the *Samaritan*, let us *own the mercy* we have received. Have we not reason to fear that, of the multitudes who are indebted to the Divine goodness, there is *not one in ten* who has a becoming sense of it? Let us labour to impress our hearts deeply with such a sense. Let us remember what it is that God expects of us; and let us farther consider that, as the exercise of *gratitude* towards such a Benefactor is most reasonable, so also in proportion it is most delightful to the soul; it is indeed (as one well expresses it) like the *incense* of the *Jewish priest*, which, while it did an honour to God, did likewise regale with its own fragrancy the person by whom it was offered.

SECTION LV.

Matt. xix. 1, 2. Mark x. 1.

And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he arose from thence, and departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan: And great multitudes followed him; and the people resorted unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again, and he healed them there.

Luke xvii. 20—37.

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see *it*. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after *them*, nor follow *them*. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one *part* under heaven, shineth unto the other *part* under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded, but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he

which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two *men* in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two *women* shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two *men* shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord! And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body *is*, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

May our minds be formed to a true taste and relish for the *kingdom of God!* and may we learn wherein it *consists;* not, like the kingdoms of this world, in external pomp and splendour, but *in righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost*, and that inward subjection of soul to the Divine government which is the essence of religion, and the grand security and felicity of our natures! Many are, like the *Pharisees*, talking of it, and expecting it, while it is *among them*, and they know it not; and, perhaps, despise the humble Christians *in whom* it resides, and most eminently triumphs. May they who think most lightly of it, never have cause to *wish* at last for the return of those *days of the Son of man*, which are now their burden, rather than their pleasure, while they hear vital and inward religion in vain recommended and enforced!

What *our Lord* says of *his coming* to the destruction of *Jerusalem*, may be applied, as it is elsewhere, to his *appearance* at the *final judgment*, of which the former was a figure. Thus shall the men of *that generation* be immersed in business and pleasure; and that tremendous *day* shall *come upon them*, even *as a thief in the night;* so that they shall find themselves overwhelmed with irrecoverable ruin, while they cry, *Peace and safety.* (1 Thess. v. 2, 3.) And thus doth the awful *hour of death*, which consigns men over to judgment, *surprise* the generality of mankind, while they are thoughtless of it, and unprepared for its approach, amidst all the solemn warnings of it which they daily receive. May we be always in a prepared posture, and daily live as on the verge of eternity!

And if once we are engaged in a course of serious preparation, let us *remember Lot's wife*, and take heed that we *turn not back* again. We *flee* as *for our lives;* let us not *look behind us.* Whatever is to be *left*, whatever is to be *lost*, it is enough if our *life be given us as for a prey.*

If we have any just hope that it will be so given us, we have a great deal of reason to own and adore the riches of Divine grace to us, of that distinguishing grace which has *taken us* when others are *left;* some perhaps, employed in the *same business*, and dwelling in the *same place;* and, may not I add, some lying in the *same bed* too!

In a word, let all seriously bethink themselves, and *flee from the wrath to come.* God *spared not Judea*, that favourite country, when they rejected his gospel, and his Son: *let us fear, lest he also spare not us.* (Rom. xi. 20, 21.) In this respect also, *wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* The same causes will produce the same effects; and when we, in particular, of these happy, but sinful nations, consider our numerous and aggravated provocations, we shall see much greater reason to wonder that the *judgments of God* have been so long delayed, than that they should at last fall upon us with an insupportable weight.

SECTION LVI.

Luke xviii. 1—14.

And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord saith, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted

in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

How hateful is the character of this *unjust judge, who neither feared God, nor reverenced man*, but centred all his regards in himself! How hateful, and how contemptible, in any circumstance of life; especially in a *magistrate*, the guardian of the public interest, in comparison of which he ought to forget his own! Yet even he was prevailed upon by *importunity;* and *our Lord* mentions it, to encourage the *fervour* of our *addresses* to the throne of grace. What then, is the blessed God, like this *unjust judge*, to be *wearied out* with a peal of words, and thereby weakly induced, to do what would otherwise have been contrary to his designs! Far from us be so absurd, and so impious a thought! Our condescending *Lord* only intended to intimate, that if the repeated *importunate cries* of the afflicted may at length prevail, even on an *inhuman heart*, they will be much more regarded by a *righteous* and *merciful God*, who is always ready to bestow his favours, when he sees we are prepared to receive them. We may be sure, that *God will vindicate his elect:* let this encourage them, though *the rod of the wicked* may for a while *rest on their back;* and let it intimidate the *proud oppressors* of the earth, who in the midst of all their pomp and power, are so wretched, as to have the prayers of God's people against them.

How instructive is this *parable* of the *publican* and *Pharisee?* and how well connected with the former, to teach us that *humility,* without which *repeated prayers* will be repeated insults and affronts to heaven? Let us not *trust in ourselves, that we are righteous, and despise others;* but rather be severe to our own faults, and candid to theirs.

Behold this arrogant *Pharisee, standing apart* from the *pub-*

lican, but as near as he could to the seat of the Divine Majesty! And hear him boldly celebrating his own praises, rather than those of his Maker! *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men.* We see a man may acknowledge, it is the *grace of God* which *makes the difference* between him and others; and yet while he professes that *humbling doctrine* of the gospel, may be blown up with *pride:* yea, he may nourish, and express that *pride*, by the words in which he declares his *faith.* Mistaken creature! that imagined this *encomium* on himself was *a prayer*, and trusted in this defective *morality*, and these *ceremonies* of human device, while an utter stranger to real vital religion. Happier, a thousand times happier, the poor *publican*, when abasing himself in the dust; when *smiting on his breast;* when owning himself *a sinner*, and imploring the Divine *mercy* as his only hope! *Lord*, we equally need it: may we with equal *humility* seek it! May we habitually maintain those views of ourselves which may promote that *humility*, so necessary in order to the acceptance of our addresses, and therefore to the happiness of our souls. And indeed, if in our approaches to God, we can place our confidence in any *righteousness of our own*, whatever we may imagine of our own knowledge or holiness, we have need to be *taught again the first principles* of both, and are strangers to the essentials of religion.

SECTION LVII.

Matt. xix. 3—12. Mark x. 2—12.

And the Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning of the creation made them male and female? And said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so.

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery : and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same *matter*. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs which were so born from *their* mother's womb : and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men : and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

From what we have been reading we may justly take occasion to adore the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence in creating the human species *male and female*, and providing for his new formed creature *Adam* so suitable and so amiable a companion, to enliven every other object of delight, and to crown the pleasures of *Paradise* itself.

Let us also acknowledge the apparent interposition of a wise and kind providence in maintaining such a *proportion* between the *sexes*, even to this day, which so apparently tends to the benefit of both, as well as to the support of the race in future ages; as also in perpetuating in their hearts through succeeding generations that *mutual tenderness* for each other which the purest bosoms may feel and vow, and which is the foundation of such an union of souls as no other friendship will admit.

Let those who are *married*, considering the indissoluble bond by which *God has joined them together*, make it their constant care to promote the comfort and happiness of each other: and let them most cautiously guard against every degree of *contention*, or even of *distaste*, which might at length occasion an alienation in their affections, and render so close a bond proportionably grievous.

Let none rashly run into these important engagements, nor determine their choice by light considerations, of a low and

transitory nature. And if any, on the whole, prefer the freedom of a *single life* to a state which, with its peculiar comforts, must necessarily have its peculiar cares and trials too, let them diligently improve that disengagement, as an obligation to seek the *kingdom of God* with greater ardour, and to pursue its interests with more active zeal and application.

To conclude: since it appears in this respect, as well as in some others, that the *gospel* revokes some indulgences which the *law of Moses* gave, let us endeavour to form our hearts by Divine grace to a wisdom, seriousness and spirituality, which may suit this nobler dispensation; and while we are reading the precept of the *Jewish* legislator, let us remember we have a sublimer *Master*, and are to *do* and forbear *more than others.* (Matt. v. 47.)

SECTION LVIII.

MATT. XIX. 13—15. MARK X. 13—16. LUKE XVIII. 15—17.

THEN were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray; but when *his* disciples saw *it*, they rebuked those that brought *them.* But when Jesus saw *it*, he was much displeased, *and* called them unto him, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put *his* hands upon them, and blessed them; and departed thence.

Let us make a pause here, that we may more attentively review this delightful and instructive sight; that we may see this compassionate *Shepherd of Israel*, thus *gathering the lambs in his arms, and carrying them in his bosom*, with all the tokens of tender regard, (Isa. xl. 11,) *rebuking his disciples* who forbade their coming and *laying his* gracious *hands upon them to bless them.* How condescending and engaging a behaviour! how encouraging and amiable an image!

Let his *ministers* view it, to teach them a becoming regard to

the lambs of their *flock*, who should early be taken notice of and instructed; and for and with whom they should frequently *pray;* remembering how often Divine grace takes possession of the heart in the years of *infancy*, and *sanctifies* the children of God almost *from the womb.* Let every first impression made upon their tender minds be cherished; and let not those whom *Christ* himself is ready to receive be disregarded by *his servants*, who upon all occasions should *be gentle unto all*, and *apt to teach.* (2 Tim. ii. 24.)

Let *parents* view this sight with pleasure and thankfulness: let it encourage them to *bring their children to Christ* by faith, and to commit them to him in *baptism*, and by prayer. And if he who *has the keys of death and the unseen world*, (Rev. i. 18,) see fit to remove those dear creatures from us in their early days, let the remembrance of this story comfort us, and teach us to hope that he who so graciously *received these children* has not forgotten ours, but that they are sweetly *fallen asleep in him*, and will be the everlasting objects of his care and love; *for of such is the kingdom of God.*

Let *children* especially observe this. The great and glorious *Redeemer* did not *despise these little ones;* nay, he was *much displeased* with those who would have prevented their being *brought to him.* As kindly would he, no doubt, have received you, ye dear *children*, who read or hear this; as kindly will he still receive you, if you go to him in the sincerity of your hearts, and ask his blessing in humble and earnest prayer. Though you see not *Christ*, he sees and hears *you;* he is now present with you, to receive you, to bless you, and to save you. Happy the weakest of you when lodged in the *arms of Christ!* nothing can *pluck you from thence*, or ever hurt you there.

In a word, let us *all* commit ourselves to him; and let us be disposed to *become as little children*, if we desire to *enter into his kingdom.* Let us not govern ourselves by the vain maxims of a corrupt and degenerate age. Let not pride, ambition, lust, or avarice, possess, torment, and enslave our minds; but, with the amiable *simplicity of children*, let us put ourselves into the wise and kind hand of *Jesus*, as our Guardian, and refer ourselves to his pastoral and parental care, to be clothed and fed, to be guided and disposed of, as he shall see fit. For this purpose, O God, may we be *born again* by the *Spirit*, and *formed anew* by thy *grace!* since by this method alone we can be *made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, (Col. i. 12,) and be so *the children of God*, as to be at length *the children of the resurrection.*

SECTION LIX.

MATT. XIX. 16—30. MARK. X 17—31. LUKE XVIII. 18—30.

AND when he was gone forth into the way, behold, a certain ruler came running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, saying, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? and Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is* none good but one, *that is*, God. But if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou knowest the commandments, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and thy mother, and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man answered and said unto him, Master, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Now when Jesus heard these things, beholding him *he* loved him, and said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing; if thou wilt be perfect, go thy way, sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he was very sorrowful, and went away grieved; for he was very rich, *and* had great possessions. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, *and* as-

tonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? but Jesus looking upon them saith, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. With men this is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, *and* for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive an hundred fold now in this present time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come shall inherit everlasting life. But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last *shall be* first.

Who can behold, without weeping eyes, and a bleeding heart, *this lovely youth perishing in sin!* What could have appeared more promising, than this solicitous *concern* about *eternal life*, in a *young man*, rich in the possessions, and high in the honours of the present world! To see him *running* with such eagerness to the feet of a *Redeemer*, *kneeling down*, with such humility before him, calling upon him by so honourable a *title*, and professing so sincere a desire of instruction, could not but lead us to conclude, *Surely this man was not far from the kingdom of God;* nor do we wonder, that *Jesus beholding him loved him.* Who would not have looked on such an object with complacency! Who would not have expected, that *this pleasant plant* should have *brought forth grapes:* but behold, *it brought forth wild grapes!* (Isa. v. 2.) So have we seen, in the compass, perhaps, of our small observation and experience, many a *fair blossom* fall withering to the ground. So have the hopes of *ministers* and *parents*, and other religious friends, been disappointed, with respect to many *young persons*, adorned with a variety of amiable qualifications, yet *lacking one thing*, and *parting with Christ* when put to the trial, after all the regard they have shewn to his name, and all the pleas-

ing expectations they have given of a willingness to serve him. O my *young reader*, whoever thou art, I earnestly pray, that thou mayest not be added to that number!

This unhappy *youth* imagined himself in the certain *way of salvation*, because he was free from the stains of fraud and injustice, of adultery and theft, of perjury and murder, or any other gross and infamous sin. But behold, how awful a method *Christ* takes, to open to him that *insincerity of heart*, which he seems himself not to have known. Observe, how strange a command he gives him, *to sell all, and distribute to the poor.* We cannot say, that the very same is directly required of us; yet by this order that was given to him, we are obliged to part with *our all*, when it cannot be preserved with a good conscience; and by the general rules of *Christianity*, and its fundamental precepts, we are in duty bound, conscientiously to use, not only a *little part* of our substance, but even *the whole* of it for God, as *stewards* who are another day to give up a strict account for all. And if we like not *Christ* and *glory* on these terms, *our end* will be no better than *his*. Of him we read, that after all his morality and all his zeal *he went away* from *Christ*, (though *sorrowful*,) *because he had great possessions.* Oh dear-bought *wealth*, which was the price of his soul!

Let us look upon him, and receive instruction; let us learn to be upon our guard against *this vain world*, that specious *harlot*, *who hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her.* (Prov. vii. 26.) How universally are *riches* desired, how eagerly are they pursued, by persons in all stations and of all professions of life! Yet what do they generally prove but shining mischief and gilded ruin! If we believe the incarnate *wisdom of God*, *they make our salvation exceeding hazardous.* Yet who does not wish for them? Who does not think that he has wisdom and grace enough to stand the danger? But God knows otherwise, and therefore he keeps, or makes, so many of *his children poor.* Let them be contented with their safer state; and let those who are *rich* be importunate with God for those influences of his *grace* which can effect those things that are *impossible with men.*

On the whole, let us not think much of any thing which *Christ* demands, knowing that whatever we may *lose*, or whatever we may *resign*, we shall *gain far more* by his favour. The *testimony of a good conscience* before him, a life of *friendship* with God, the consolations of his Spirit, and the hopes of his glory, will yield, even for the present, *an hundred-fold* more satisfaction than the possession of the greatest *riches*, or the enjoyment of the most tender and beloved *relatives.* How much more abundantly then will all be repaid in the *heavenly state!* And, if we cannot trust the *promise* of *the Lord* for it, we are no more real *Christians* than if we were publicly to worship *mammon*, or *Plutus*, with all the idolatrous rites of the ancient heathens.

SECTION LX.

MATTHEW XX. 1—16.

FOR the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man *that is* an householder, which went out early in the morning, to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right *that* shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received *it* they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, these last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

May we by Divine grace appear in the happy number of those who are not only *called*, but *chosen* too! If we are *first* in privileges and opportunities, let us be careful that our improvement be proportionable; otherwise we shall be *last*, and see ourselves another day exceeded, and perhaps condemned, by those who stood in a rank much below us.

We are called to a course of holy *labour*, even to *work in our Lord's vineyard*, or in every station, whether public or private, to do our utmost to promote the glory of God and the happiness of mankind. Let us not, with so many calls and so many advantages, *stand all the day idle;* but let us be active and patient, and cheerfully willing to *bear all the burden and heat of the day* in so good a cause; knowing that ere long *the evening will come*, and that he who employs us saith, *Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.* (Rev. xxii. 12.)

Let such as have long neglected the great business of life be encouraged with this thought, that some were *called at the eleventh hour;* but let none presume on their having such a call, nor strain the *parable* so far as to imagine that an *equal reward* awaits *all*, without any regard to their characters or improvements; which is most contrary to the reason of things, to the word of God, and to the great intent of that day which is *to render to every man according to his deeds.* (Rom. ii. 6.)

The *Gentiles* are indeed now called to equal privileges with the *Jews*, to which this circumstance of the *parable* refers: and we all see how odious a temper it was in that favourite nation to be *offended* with the *gospel* on that account, which should rather have recommended it to their more joyful acceptance. Let us be careful to avoid every degree of *envy*, whoever may be put on a level with us, or preferred to us. Let us acknowledge the sovereign right of God to *do what he will with his own*, and let not *our eye be evil because he is good.* To prevent this, let us labour after that *unfeigned love to the brethren* which never will allow us to repine at their advancement to the greatest privileges, but will engage us to behold the favours that are shewn them with delight and satisfaction, and to rejoice in their honour and happiness as our own. So shall we exchange the basest and most uneasy *passion* of human nature for that which is of all others the noblest and the most delightful.

SECTION LXI.

MATTHEW XX. 17—20. MARK X. 32—45.
LUKE XVIII. 31—34.

AND they were in the way going up to Jerusalem ; and Jesus went before them : and they were amazed ; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took unto him the twelve disciples apart in the way, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, *saying*, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem ; and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes ; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, to scourge, and to crucify *him*. And he shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on : and they shall scourge *him*, and put him to death : and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things : and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons James and John, the sons of Zebedee, worshipping *him*, and desiring a certain thing of him : saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you ? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. And the mother saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with ? And they said unto him, We are able. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and

with the baptism that I am baptized withall shall ye be baptized: but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard *it*, they began to be much displeased with James and John, and were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them *to him*, and saith unto them, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest among you, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Astonishing grace and compassion of the *Son of God* in going up to *Jerusalem* at this passover, when he so circumstantially knew all the things which were to befall him there! not only that he should be *put to death*, but *in what manner* he should suffer; and what cruelty and what scorn should introduce the last scene of his agonies! Yet, with so sad a prospect in his eye, he marched on with distinguished alacrity, *leaving the company*, as if he longed to encounter what they could not bear to see, or even to hear of. Glorious *Captain of our salvation*, give us the like alacrity in all the sufferings we are called to bear for thee!

Who would not grieve to see these good *apostles* still so much possessed with the spirit of this world, and still dreaming of *preferment* in a *temporal kingdom?* Who would not especially lament it, that his most intimate friends, *James*, and *John* the beloved disciple, should be the persons who should come to him with this strange request? Justly did *our Lord* answer them, *You know not what you ask.* And may not the same answer often be made to *us?* When therefore he denies us the *great things* that we are seeking for ourselves, let us be satisfied with the *denial* he sees fit to give us; believing that it is wisdom and love, and not unkindness, that produces it.

Let us often ask ourselves, *Can* we *share the sufferings* which *our Lord* endured? If we do not desire to do it so far as he shall appoint, we are not worthy to be called *his disciples.* Let us then *gird up the loins of our minds*, and wait our Master's signal to go forth to any suffering or service that he shall require; ever ready to make ourselves *the servants of all*, and therein to imitate the humility of the *Son of man*, who *came not to be ministered unto*,

but to minister: yet, after all we can do or bear for him, let our trust still be in the merits of his righteousness and blood who *gave his life a ransom for many.* So shall we be fitted for those distinguished *honours* in the heavenly world, in comparison with which thrones and sceptres on earth are but empty pageants and childish toys.

SECTION LXII.

LUKE XVIII. 35—43; XIX. 1. MATT. XX. 29—34. MARK X. 46—52.

AND it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: And hearing the multitude pass by he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, *thou* Son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out so much the more, *Thou* Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: And when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: And all the people, when they saw *it*, gave praise unto God.

And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho; and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the high-way side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, who passed by, he began to cry out, and say, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; Jesus, *thou* Son of David, have mercy on me. And the multitude rebuked him, and many charged him that he should hold his peace; but he cried the more a great deal, saying,

Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and commanded *him* to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto *him*, Be of good comfort, rise, he calleth *you*. And *he* casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus. And Jesus said, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? He said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. So Jesus had compassion *on him*, and touched his eyes: and said unto *him*, go *thy* way, *thy* faith hath made *thee* whole. And immediately his eyes received sight, and he followed Jesus in the way.

Our Lord's progress is marked with another work of Divine power, and beneficence in *opening the eyes of the blind.* With what *importunity* was the cure desired! And when the petitioner was for a while *discouraged*, with what eagerness was that *importunity* repeated, *Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!* Thus will the sinner cry to *Jesus* when he sees how much he needs him. But, alas! men are not aware of their spiritual indigence and distress: they *say* they *are rich, and increasing in goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that they are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* (Rev. iii. 17.)

When once they come to be awakened to a just sense of their case, there is then room for hope, and great encouragement for their address. We may in such circumstances say to them, as was said to *Bartimeus, Be of good courage, rise, he calleth thee.* With pleasure should we deliver such a message; with pleasure should we lead on the *lame* and the *blind*, the weak and the trembling, in their application to *Christ:* and in all the instances, in which his victorious grace is exercised, should join with those who have received it in *glorifying God*, and in celebrating the *praise* of this Deliverer, whom he has mercifully raised up for his people.

SECTION LXIII.

Luke xix. 1.

And behold, *there was* a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was : and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him ; for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste and come down ; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw *it*, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord ; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Thus did our *Lord Jesus Christ*, wheresoever he came, scatter blessings around him, both to the souls and the bodies of men. Who can wonder that Zaccheus had a curiosity *to see such a person!* And how happily did that curiosity end! *Christ* graciously *observed him*, and with an amiable frankness and openness of heart, invited himself to be *a Guest* at his house; choosing to accept the entertainment of a *publican*, and to distinguish with a particular regard one that was so desirous to see him. And let us diligently observe how happy *a change* this visit produced in the master of the family. O *Zaccheus*, well wast thou repaid for thine hospitality when *salvation came to thine house*, and the *Saviour* himself bore witness to thee as *a son of Abraham!*

What cannot the grace of God effect? This *publican* was in the morning contriving only how he might increase his estate by all possible methods of gain; and, before evening, he cries out, *Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.* Thus does the *Spirit* of *Christ* operate on the soul, producing in it the fruits of

righteousness and charity to our fellow-creatures, as well as of love to God and faith in the Redeemer. And surely the *miracle* by which *the walls of Jericho* were many ages before thrown down by the *sound of rams-horns*, was not greater in its kind than that which now triumphed over the heart of *Zaccheus*, and threw down all the obstacles which corrupt nature had formed against the entrance of *Christ* into it.

Now were his eyes opened, and he saw in a moment how much more valuable *the pearl of price* was than all the *riches* he could part with to procure it. And he judged rightly of religion when he saw the necessity not only of *faith*, but of *charity* too; and not only of *charity*, but of *restitution* also to those whom he had injured, without which the highest pretences to *charity* are but presenting to God *robbery for a burnt-offering*.

SECTION LXIV.

Luke xix. 11—28.

And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, *here is* thy

pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin : for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man : thou takest up that thou laidst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he said unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow : Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give *it* to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given ; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay *them* before me.

And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

Let us also hear and fear. *Our Lord* is gone, and *has received his kingdom.* He has *delivered* to us our stock, to be *improved* in his service : let us be animated to *diligence* in it ; for proportionable to that *diligence* will be our *reward.* Let us remember we labour for ourselves while we labour for him ; as all the progress we make in wisdom and in goodness renders our own souls so much the happier, and will render them so to all eternity. Blessed *servants* that have the applause of such a *Master*, and share *a reward* as liberal as that conferred on a faithful steward, who should be made *governor of* a province containing *ten cities.*

Let us beware of a *slothful neglect* of our stock : let us beware of those *hard thoughts of God* which would discourage us from pursuing his service. Above all, let us take heed, that we do not proudly and insolently *reject the govrrnment* of his *anointed Son*, and either say with our tongues, or declare by our actions, *We will not have this man to reign over us;* for if we do, we *speak a word against our own lives.* He will be glorified by us, or upon us. And oh, what shall we do, if in that dreadful day he should *bring us forth* as the helpless prisoners of his justice, and command us *to be slain in his presence!* How can we withstand his power! or to the horns of what altar shall we flee for sanctuary? *O Lord, our flesh trembleth for fear of thee,*

and we are afraid of thy judgments. (Psalm cxix. 120.) May we never be the miserable objects of them; but having faithfully served thee here, may *that* be to us a day of honour, reward, and triumph, which shall be to every presumptuous rebel a day of shame and terror, of dreadful execution and eternal destruction!

SECTION LXV.

JOHN XI. 55—57, XII. 1—11. MATTHEW XXVI. 6—13. MARK XIV. 3—9.

AND the Jews' Passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come up to the feast?

Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew *it*, that they might take him.

Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper in the house of Simon the leper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then came Mary unto him, having an alabaster box with a pound of ointment of spikenard, very precious, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair. And she brake the box, and poured it on his head, as he sat *at meat;* and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

And there were some disciples that had indignation within themselves, and said, To what purpose *is* this waste? for this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor; and they murmured against her. When Jesus understood *it*, he said unto them, Let her alone: why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: for in that she hath kept this ointment, *and* poured it on my body, she did *it* to anoint me aforehand to my burying. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, *this* also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

We see how happily *Mary* improved by *sitting at the feet of Jesus*, and what evidence she gave of her having *chosen the better part*. (Compare Luke x. 39, 42.) Like *her*, let us with humble thankfulness bestow *our very best* on him, who has given us *that* and every thing else. She gladly *poured out* her choicest *ointment* on him, whose *name* is to every true believer far more fragrant than *ointment poured forth*. (Cant. i. 3.) How does her generous love shame those who grudge every expense in the cause of *Christ!*

When we are relieving the pious *poor*, we are, as it were, *anointing the feet of Jesus*: we are indeed performing a service far more acceptable than any thing of this kind could in itself be. Let us remember that *we have the poor always with us;* and that they are permitted to continue among us *that we may do them good whenever we please*. Far be it from us to imagine that what we so spend is *waste*. Let all who would not share in the guilt and punishment of *Judas* abhor the vile hypocrisy of making a pretended concern for the *poor* a cloak for an opportunity of enriching themselves with *their spoils;* than which

nothing can be more infamous, or can have a directer tendency to mingle the consuming curse of a righteous and almighty God with all that a man possesses.

The *Pharisees* conspired to *kill Lazarus.* What a mixture was this of cruelty and folly! What was *his crime?* or what could *their hope* be? From what *death* could not *Christ* have delivered him? or from what *tomb* could he not again have recalled him? Yet something like this is the madness of all who hate and persecute others for being the trophies of the Redeemer's victory and grace.

But let not his servants fear; *their Redeemer is strong*, the *Lord of hosts is his name.* (Jer. i. 34.) His *work is perfect;* and the day and hour is approaching in which his triumph over all his enemies shall be so complete, that his friends shall be for ever secure, not only from being destroyed, but from being alarmed by them.

SECTION LXVI.

JOHN XII. 12—19. MATT. XXI. 1—9. MARK XI. 1—10. LUKE XIX. 29—40.

ON the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna; blessed *is* the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

And it came to pass on the next day, when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called *the mount* of Olives, Jesus sendeth forth two of his disciples, saying unto them, Go your way into the village over against you; and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her, whereon yet never man sat: loose *them*, and bring *them* hither unto me. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? Thus shall ye say unto him, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them hither.

And the disciples that were sent went their way,

and did as Jesus commanded them, and found the colt, even as he had said unto them, tied by the door without, in a place where two ways met: and they loose him. And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof that stood there said unto them, Why loose ye the colt? And they said unto them, even as Jesus had commanded, the Lord hath need of him; and they let them go. And they brought the ass and the colt to Jesus, and they cast their garments upon the colt; and they set Jesus thereon, and he sat upon him. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, as it is written, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and *that* they had done these things unto him.

And as he went, a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed *them* in the way. And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! blessed is he, a king, that cometh in the name of the Lord: blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest!

The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him. And some of the Pharisees

from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And he answered and said unto them, I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

Let us behold this *meek triumph* of the great *Redeemer* with pleasure! He entered the capital of his kingdom *riding upon an ass;* a circumstance in which he made, though by no means a ridiculous, yet to be sure a very humble figure: yea, he appeared exactly as the *prophet* described him, upon *a colt, the foal of an ass;* not yet grown up to its best form, nor adorned with any sumptuous or elegant furniture, but only covered with the *mantles* of his poor attendants, and perhaps with nothing better than *a cord* for a bridle, which might have *tied* the foal *at the door.*

Let us imagine that we saw the *Son of God* and the *King of Israel,* thus proceeding towards *Jerusalem,* and the *people meeting him,* and surrounding him with their acclamations: *Hosannah! Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord!* Do not our hearts spring at the sound? Do we not, as it were in spirit, go forth with them, and join in their sublime, though simple song? Thus let us welcome him into our hearts! Let us echo it back! *Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord,* with Divine authority, and Divine blessings in his hand! And *blessed be the kingdom* he hath erected! May perpetual prosperity attend it! May *the north give up* a swarm of subjects to it; and may not *the south keep back* her swarthy sons! May *nations be born at once,* and thousands together made *willing in the day of his power!* Surely if these are not our affectionate wishes, the warm and zealous sentiments of our very hearts, it may almost be expected that the very *stones should cry out,* to accuse and condemn our ungrateful stupidity.

Unhappy *Pharisees,* who looked on these *triumphs* with envy and rage, and grieved that *the world was gone after him!* Yet less unhappy had they not renewed their attempts against him, those fatal attempts which ended in their ruin! But who, that had seen the *procession,* and heard the *shouts* of the transported *multitude,* could have imagined or believed, that before the end of the week they should have turned their voices against him, and instead of *Hosannah,* should have cried out, *Crucify him?* Yet so it was, and *Christ* knew it would be so. Such is the uncertainty of popular applause! Who would then purchase it at the expense of his conscience, or even of his ease?

These transports were raised by the hopes of a *temporal kingdom;* and when those hopes were disappointed, these transports were turned into rage. Oh that there may be none, under all the engagements of a *Christian,* and even of a *ministerial* profession, who proclaim *Christ* with great appearances of zeal, only that

they may exalt themselves; and wish prosperity to *his kingdom*, only as it may promote their own interest in a *world* from which it was the great design of his death to *redeem* his servants.

SECTION LXVII.

MATT. XXI. 10, 11, 14, 17. MARK XI. 11.
LUKE XIX. 41—44.

AND when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee: and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? and the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus went into the temple and looked round about upon all things: and the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. And when the chief priests and Scribes saw the wonderful things he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

And when now the eventide was come, he went out of the city into Bethany with the twelve: and he lodged there.

The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* envied *Christ;* but the *children* surround him with their *Hosannahs;* and he graciously accepts

their feeble accents of praise, as *ordained* by God out of the *mouth of babes and sucklings*. Nor will he now *despise the day of small things*. Oh that we might have the pleasure to see *little children* pronouncing the name of *Christ* with reverence and love! And surely we who are *parents* must add, with a peculiar accent, Oh that *our own* may join in the choir! May they learn the *song* from our lips: and may our whole lives be one continued visible proof of the devotion and affection with which we present it! *Amen.*

SECTION LXVIII.

John xii. 20—36.

And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: If any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour.

Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard *it*, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered, and said, This voice came not because of me, but for

your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.

The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.

These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

Who can wonder at the desire these *Greeks* expressed to *see* so celebrated a person as *Jesus* was! We hope there was something more than mere curiosity in it, and that at length they saw him with believing eyes, and, according to his prediction, *glorified him* by a cordial acceptance of his gospel.—His *disciples*, we see were ready to introduce them: and surely every faithful *minister of Christ* will undertake the task with pleasure when he sees souls awakened by Divine grace, and inquiring after *Jesus* with affectionate concern.

Blessed be God, it has already, in many instances, been seen that by the *death of Christ* an *immortal seed* was sown, which has multiplied in all ages, and is still multiplying: Oh that it might have a greater *increase!* One would think that words so gracious as these should promote that *increase*, and operate upon every heart to produce *a love* to him sufficient to conquer every danger and opposition which may be met with in his cause: behold the *promise* which he has left upon record; "*If any man*, be he ever so mean and unworthy, will but faithfully *serve and follow me*, whatever his former wanderings and rebellions may have been, *where I am, there shall also my servant be.*" Happy state indeed! not only, like these *Greeks* to have a transient sight of *Christ*, but to be *for ever with him!*

How admirable is the love and steadfastness of our *Redeemer*, who procured so great a happiness for us at so dear an expense! and even when his innocent *soul was troubled* in the view of his *sufferings*, instead of declining them, he met them with joy! How should it animate us to renew that general comprehensive

petition, than which none can be more suitable to us with regard to all the divine dispensations; *Father, glorify thine own name!* Glorify thyself, *O Lord!* and to that great end dispose of us as thou pleasest; for we should abhor ourselves if we had any interest separate from thine!

We may be assured, as certainly as by *a voice from heaven*, that this great end shall be answered: and in this we should rejoice. Behold *the prince of this world is cast out!* Behold, *Satan* is vanquished by *Christ!* and *Jesus is lifted up* on the cross for a standard to all the nations. Behold the attractive magnet by which *all men* are to be *drawn*, by which all his chosen people shall be brought to him, and so raised up to heaven itself! Let us *look unto him from the ends of the earth*, and labour with our cold hearts to awaken them to that lively and ardent affection which we owe to him who was *crucified for us*.

For ever adored be Divine grace for this *gospel light* which discovers to us so excellent an object! May we use it to saving purposes, and so *walk in it*, as that we may appear *to be the children of light!* Let us think of that last distribution of mankind, when *the children* and heirs *of light* and *darkness* are once for all to be separated. Let us think of the gloom of eternal *night*, which will shorly overtake those by whom the gospel is now despised; and remember how much it will be aggravated by the *light* we have so long seen. Do thou, *O God*, at whose word *light* arose out of darkness, *send forth* by thine influences on our hearts *thy light and thy truth*, that they may *lead and bring us to thine holy hill*, (Psalm xliii 3.) and that we may have the satisfaction of *knowing whither we go*, even when *we walk through the* dark *valley of the shadow of death*. (Psalm xxiii. 4.)

SECTION LXIX.

MATT. XXI. 13—22. MARK XI. 12—26. LUKE XIX. 45—48.

Now on the morrow, in the morning as he returned from Bethany into the city, he hungered. And seeing a fig-tree afar off in the way having leaves, he came to it, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing thereon but leaves only; for the time of figs was not *yet*. And Jesus answered

and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward: No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard *it*. And presently the fig-tree withered away. And when the disciples saw *it*, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig-tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this *which is done* to the fig-tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive.

And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry *any* vessel through the temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. And he taught daily in the temple: and the Scribes and chief priests heard *it*, and sought how they might destroy him; and could not find what they might do: for they feared him, because all the people were very attentive to hear him, and were astonished at his doctrine. And when even was come, he went out of the city.

And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering, said unto them, Have faith in God; for verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any:

that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

May none of us ever indulge such a temper, or ever rest in an empty profession; lest, being like *the fig-tree* before us, *which had leaves* but no *fruit*, the *curse of Christ* should be pronounced upon us, which would *immediately wither* us amidst all our verdure! Let us remember that this was intended as one of those significant actions by which the holy messengers of God frequently intimated approaching judgments. Happy would it have been if some, instead of searching out objections against it, had seriously considered its design, and the sad aspect with which it looks on those who, like them, *receive the grace of God in vain!*

How hard is it to purge a carnal heart, and disentangle it from the snares of a deceitful world! No sooner were these *traders driven from the temple*, but they *return* to it again; and are as busy the *next day* in the pursuit of their unlawful gain as they had been before. And thus how often are *convictions stifled* by the love of this world! And if the voice of conscience, or the word of God, may interrupt us for a while in our unlawful courses, yet where it may affect our worldly interest, how ready are we to return to them again! and with what difficulty are we brought so far to lay aside our earthly projects, as not to take them with us into the *house of God!* Purge us, *O Lord*, from every irregular desire; pursue and perfect thine own work; and *incline our hearts unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness!* (Psalm cxix. 36.)

The promises which are made to a *miraculous faith in prayer*, are not indeed *our immediate concern;* but we may truly infer from them some encouragement in favour of the *prayer of faith*, on whatever account, and in whatever circumstances it be offered. At least we may infer the necessity of *forgiving injuries*, if we desire that our petitions should be received with favour. Let us remember it; and labour to approach the throne of a *forgiving God*, with hearts not only clear of every malignant *passion*, but full of that cordial and universal *benevolence* which may engage us to pray for all men, and particularly for those who have least deserved our kindness, and seem least disposed to requite it.

SECTION LXX.

MATT. XXI. 23—32. MARK XI. 27—33. LUKE XX. 1—8.

AND they came again to Jerusalem: and it came to pass, that as he was walking and taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the Scribes came upon *him* with the elders of the people, and spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? and who is he that gave thee this authority to do these things? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people: *and* all the people will stone us, for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell whence *it was*. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. But what think ye? A *certain* man had two sons: and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I *go*, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

MATT. XXI. 33—46. MARK XII. 1—12. LUKE XX. 9—19.

And he began to speak unto them by parables: Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. And at the season, when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. But the husbandmen caught him, and beat him, and sent *him* away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and they beat him also, and wounded him in the head, and entreated *him* shamefully, and sent *him* away empty. And again he sent the third; and they wounded him also, and cast him out, and him they killed. Again he sent other servants more than the first; and they did unto them likewise.

Then the lord of the vineyard having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he said, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence *him* when they see him. He sent him also last of all unto them. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they reasoned, among themselves, saying, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance, and it shall be ours. And they caught *him*, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew *him*. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will come and miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. *Jesus saith*, He shall come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. And when they heard it they said, God forbid. And he beheld them, and said,

Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

And when the chief priests and the Scribes and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them; and the same hour they sought to lay hands on him; but they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

When we read this *parable*, and consider it as levelled at the *Jews*, we applaud the righteous judgment of God in revenging so severely upon them the *quarrel of his covenant*, and the *blood of his Son;* but let us take heed to ourselves, *lest we also fall after the same example of unbelief.* (Heb. iv. 11.)

God has given to every man some part of *his vineyard* to cultivate and improve, or some advantages to know and serve him. And as for us who enjoy the *Christian* dispensation, we have particular reason to say, *the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places.* (Psalm xvi. 6.) *What could he have done more for* this part of *his vineyard?* How ungrateful therefore shall we be, and how miserable too, if we withhold *the fruits* he so reasonably expects; if we slight the *messengers* by whom he so frequently and so pathetically demands them; yea, if by wilful impenitence and unbelief we in effect renew the *slaughter* of *his beloved Son*, after that amazing favour he has done us, in charging him with an *embassy of peace* to us, whose aggravated crimes had long since deserved that he should have sent amongst us the *messengers of his vengeance.* Oh that we may never be *condemned out of our own mouths* in the censures we pass on the guilty *Jews!*

We cannot surely think of the awful threatening of *our Lord* without some secret terror for ourselves, when we consider how shamefully we of this nation have abused our privileges. *The kingdom of God*, said he, *shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* God had been just, had he long since executed such a judgment upon us: may he be merciful to us all in suspending and averting it! May his compassion particularly extend to those amongst us who reject *Christianity;* for the passage before us has a dread-

ful aspect upon such! Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; whether they will submit, or whether they will oppose; *Christ is made the Head of the corner*, and God will for ever establish him as such. Woe to them who, instead of joining with him, and fixing the stress of their souls upon him, deliberately set themselves to oppose his cause and interest! On such undoubtedly *will he fall* like a mighty rock of adamant, and miserably crush them in pieces, and *grind them to powder.*

Thus did *our Lord* warn his enemies most wisely and most graciously; but they despised the admonition, and hated him for what was so kindly intended. *They sought to lay hands on him* because *he had spoken this parable against them.* High provocation indeed, to set their danger faithfully before them, that if by any means it were possible they might be awakened to escape it! But, alas, what can save those whose spiritual distempers are exasperated by the most proper remedies prescribed for their cure.

SECTION LXXI.

Matthew xxii. 1—14.

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and *my* fatlings *are* killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of *it*, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated *them* spitefully, and slew *them.* But when the king heard *thereof*, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to

the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few *are* chosen.

How rich are the provisions of the gospel! *a feast* indeed becoming the bounty and majesty of the *King* of heaven; and proportionable even to the love which he bears to his own *Son*. in honour of whom it is made!

How wonderful is the grace which *calls us* to the participation of these provisions; *us*, who were originally *sinners of the Gentiles, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise!* (Eph. ii. 12.) Yet has he graciously *sent his messengers* to us, and *invited us* to his house, yea, to *his table*, with the additional hope of yet nobler entertainments in reserve. May none of us *reject* so condescending *a call*, lest we turn *his goodness* into righteous indignation, and *treasure up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath!* (Rom. ii. 5.)

Let us also remember, that it is not every one who professes to accept the entertainment, not every one who talks of gospel-blessings, and seems to desire a share in them, that will be admitted to it. No; in order to our *partaking of an inheritance among the saints in light*, it is necessary that we be *made meet for it* by the holiness both of our hearts and lives, (Col. i. 12.) This is *the wedding-garment*, wrought by the *Spirit of God* himself, and offered to us by the freedom of his grace. And it is so necessary, that without it we must be *separated* from the number of his guests and friends, and even, though we had *eaten and drank in his presence*, must be *cast into outer darkness*. (Luke xiii. 26.)

Frequently let us think of that awful day when *the King* will *come in to see his guests;* when God will take a most exact survey of every soul under a *Christian* profession. Let us think of that *speechless* confusion which will seize such as *have not on the wedding-garment*, and of that inexorable severity with which they will be consigned to *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. To have seen for a while the light of the gospel, and the fair beamings of an eternal hope, will add deeper and more sensible horror to those gloomy caverns; to have heard those *glad tidings of great joy*, and to hear them, as it were, echoed back in accents of

final despair, how will it wound the ear, and pierce the very heart! May God prevent it, by *fulfilling in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in us, and we in him* (2 Thess. i. 11, 12.) when the *marriage supper of the Lamb* shall be celebrated, and all the harmony, pomp, and beauty of heaven shall aid its solemnity, its magnificence, and its joy!

SECTION LXXII.

MATT. XXII. 15—22. MARK XII. 13—17.
LUKE XX. 20—26.

THEN went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in *his* talk. And they watched *him*, and sent forth spies, certain of their disciples with the Herodians, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. And when they were come, they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither carest thou for any man, for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not? shall we give, or shall we not give? But he knowing their wickedness, craftiness, and hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me, *ye* hypocrites? show me the tribute-money, that I may see it. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose *is* this image and superscription? And they answered and said unto him, Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's: and unto God the things that are God's. And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, held their peace, left him, and went their way.

Again does *our Lord* renew the repeated lessons he had before given us, both by precept and example, of uniting *wisdom* and *innocence*. How admirable was this mixture of prudence and integrity with which he confounded these *Pharisees* and *Herodians*, who, contrary as their principles and interests were, conspired against him! *For of a truth*, O Lord, *against thine Holy Child Jesus, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the people of Israel were gathered together*, (Acts iv. 27;) and their *words were softer than oil*, when *war* and murder *was in their hearts*. (Ps. lv. 21.)

Let us not, with *the simple, believe every* flattering *word*, (Prov. xiv. 15.) since sometimes the highest *encomiums* may be designed as the instruments of mischief: and too often they prove so when they are not treacherously intended.

Our Lord was indeed the Person whom these artful *hypocrites* described; and was in that respect an excellent Pattern to all his followers, and especially to his *ministers*. He *knew no man* in the discharge of his office; but, without *regarding the persons of any*, neither seeking their favour nor fearing their resentment, he *taught the way of God in truth*, and *declared the whole of his counsel*.

Let us particularly attend to his decision in the present case, and learn with the utmost readiness to *render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's*. Our civil magistrates, by virtue of their office, justly claim our reverent regard; and *tribute* is most reasonably *due* to those who *attend continually* to the service of the public, and are, under God, the pillars of our common tranquillity and happiness. (Rom. xiii. 6, 7.) Let that *tribute* therefore be justly and freely *rendered* with honour, and with cheerfulness; as he is surely unworthy to share in the benefits of government, who will not contribute his part towards its necessary expense. But let it also be remembered that the *rights of God* are sacred and inviolate: he, and he alone, is the Lord of conscience; and when that is invaded, it is easy to *judge whether man or God* is to be *obeyed;* (Acts iv. 19.) Let us be daily thankful that in our own age and country *these rights* are so happily united. May a guardian Providence continue to watch over both! and may we seriously consider how impossible it is, under such a government, to be *good Christians*, without being *obedient subjects*, or to *fear God*, if we do not *honour the king!* (1 Pet. ii. 17.)

SECTION LXXIII.

MATTHEW XXII. 23—33. MARK XII. 18—27.
LUKE XX. 27—40.

THE same day came to him certain of the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die and leave *his* wife *behind him*, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: and the second took her to wife, and he died childless: and the third took her likewise; and in like manner the seven also had her; and they left no children, and died: and last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her to wife. Jesus answered and said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more; for they are like the angels which are in heaven; and are the children of God, being the children of the ressurrection. And as touching the resurrection of the dead, that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed. Have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him saying, I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? for God is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him. Ye therefore do greatly err. And when the multitude heard *this*, they were astonished at his doctrine. Then certain of the Scribes

answering said, Master, thou hast well said. And after that they durst not ask him any *question at all.*

With what satisfaction should we read this vindication of so important an article of our faith and hope! Easily was this boasted argument of the *Sadducees* unravelled and exposed, and all the pride of those bold wits, who valued themselves so much on that imaginary penetration which laid men almost on a level with brutes, covered with just confusion. Indeed objections against the *resurrection*, much more plausible than this of theirs, may be answered in that one saying *of our Lord's: Ye know not the scriptures, nor the power of God.* Were the *scripture doctrine* of the *resurrection* considered on the one hand, and the *omnipotence* of the *Creator* on the other, it could not seem *incredible* to any *that God should raise the dead.* (Acts xxvi. 8.)

How sublime an idea does *our Lord* give us of the happiness of those who shall be *thought worthy* to attain it! *They shall be equal to the angels!* Adored be the riches of that grace which redeems us from this degenerate and miserable state, in which we had made ourselves so much *like the beasts that perish*, (Psalm xlix. 12,) to raise us to so high a dignity, and marshal us with the armies of heaven!

Let us esteem so glorious a hope aright, and with the greatest intenseness of soul pursue and insure it. And as for those *enjoyments* of this present world, which are suited only to the mortality and imperfection of it, let us moderate our regards to them, and cultivate those higher entertainments with the most solicitous care, which will be transplanted into the paradise of God, and ever flourish for the delight of his *immortal children.*

Christ, we see, argues a very important point of doctrine from *premises*, in which, perhaps, we might not have been able to have discovered it without such a hint. Let us learn to judge of *scripture arguments*, not merely by the sound, but by the sense of the words. And as *our Lord* chose a passage from the *Pentateuch*, rather than from the *prophets*, for the conviction of the *Sadducees*, let us be engaged to study the tempers, and even the prejudices, of those with whom we converse; that we may, if possible, let in the light of Divine truth on their hearts on that side by which they seem most capable of receiving it.

In a word, let us with pleasure think of the blessed God under that gracious title by which he manifested himself to *Moses at the bush.* Still he is *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; the God* of our pious ancestors, the *God* of all our departed friends who are now *sleeping in Jesus:* for *all* their souls now *live unto him*, and their bodies shall ere long be awakened by him. In like manner, if *we* are *followers of*

them who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises, when we are *gathered to our fathers*, and our names, perhaps, forgotten among succeeding generations, he will still be *our God*. He will shew us, by the blessed experience of eternity, that when he treated with us by that title, and admitted us into the covenant by which he bears it, he intended for us something far nobler and better than the transient scenes of earth and of time could admit.

SECTION LXXIV.

MATTHEW XXII. 34—40. MARK XII. 28—34.

BUT when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they also were gathered together. And one of them, *which was* a lawyer, came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked *him a question*, tempting him, and saying, Master, which *is* the first *and* the great commandment of all in the law? Jesus answered him, and said unto him, The first of all the commandments *is*. Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: This *is* the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. And the Scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him *any question*.

Whatever might be the design of the *Scribe* in putting this *question to Christ* again, which was in effect the same with what another had proposed before, (Luke x. 25, sect. cvii.) we have reason to rejoice in the repetition of so important an *answer*. Oh that it might be inscribed on our hearts as with the point of a diamond!

The first and great commandment requires us to *love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength;* and *the second, which is like unto it*, to *love our neighbour as ourselves*. But alas, what reason have we to complain of our own deficiency on both these heads! and how much *need of being taught again* even these *first principles of the oracles of God*? (Heb. v. 12.)

Can we say, with regard to *the first*, that the blessed God has the whole of our hearts? Is the utmost vigour of our faculties exerted in his service? Do we make him the end of all our actions, of all our wishes, of all our pursuits? Or are we indeed such equitable judges between ourselves and others as *the second* of these *great commandments* would require; so as to seek our own particular interests no farther than they may be subservient to, or at least consistent with, the good of the whole? Do we make all those allowances for others which we expect or desire they should make for us?—Surely we must own we are far from having *yet attained*, or from being *already perfect*. (Phil. iii. 12) But if this be not in the main the prevailing and governing temper of our minds, in vain are our *burnt-offerings* and our *sacrifices;* in vain are all the solemnities of public worship, or the forms of domestic and secret devotion; and by all our most pathetic expressions of duty to God, and friendship to men, we do but add one degree of guilt to another. Let us then most earnestly entreat that God would have mercy upon us, and by his Holy Spirit *write these laws in our hearts*.

On these subjects let *Scribes instructed to the kingdom of heaven* insist, lest they be condemned by *this expositor* of the *Jewish law*. And let those whose notions are thus *wisely* regulated, take heed, lest, while they seem *near to the kingdom of God*, by resting in mere notions, they come short of it, and sink into a ruin aggravated by their near approach to the confines of salvation and glory.

SECTION LXXV.

MATT. XXII. 41—46. MARK XII. 35—40. LUKE XX. 41—47.

WHILE the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, while he taught in the temple, How say the Scribes that Christ is the son of David? What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The son* of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him, in the book of Psalms, Lord; saying by the Holy Ghost, the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? David therefore himself calleth him Lord: If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any *man* from that day forth ask him any more *questions*. And the common people heard him gladly.

Then in the audience of all the people he said unto his disciples, in his doctrine, Beware of the Scribes, which love to walk in long robes, and love salutations in the market-places, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts; which devour widow's houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

As for that *question of Christ* with which the *Pharisees* were perplexed, the gospel has given us a key to it. Well might *David in spirit, call him Lord*, who *according to the flesh* was to descend from his loins: for *before David* or *Abraham was, he is*. (John viii. 58.) Let us adore this mysterious union of the *Divine* and *human natures* in the person of our glorious *Emmanuel;* and be very careful that we do not oppose him, if we would not be found *fighters against God*. Already is he *exalted at the right hand of the Father;* let his *friends* rejoice in his dignity and glory, and with pleasure wait the day of his complete triumph, when *all his enemies shall be put under his feet*, and even *the last* of them be *swallowed up in victory*. (1 Cor. xv. 25, 54.)

SECTION LXXVI.

MARK XII. 41—44. LUKE XXI. 1—4.
JOHN XII. 37—43.

AND Jesus sat over against the treasury, and he looked up, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And he saw also a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called *unto him* his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living.

But though he had done so many miracles before them, Yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ had *his eye* on those who were bringing *their gifts unto the* sacred *treasury*. Let us remember *his eye* is also *upon us*, to observe in what degree we are ready, on proper occasions, to contribute for the glory of God and the good of mankind; and in what proportion to the ability which God has given us. Let not the *poorest* be discouraged from doing something for these good purposes, however little they

may have it in their power to perform; since *Christ* may acknowledge the noblest *charity* in the smallest gift, as *wherever there is a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.* (2 Cor. viii. 12.)

Let us imitate the candour of our blessed *Redeemer;* and be ready to be pleased with *little services.* The circumstances of mankind are such, that few have it in their power to do *great matters* frequently for the service of others: but *the desire of a man is his kindness*, (Prov. xix. 22.) the principles and circumstances of an action recommend it more than the appearance it may make; and a multiplicity of *little kind offices,* in persons frequently conversant with each other, are the bands of society and friendship. We ought therefore to preserve an habitual tenderness and generosity of mind, and be mutually willing to oblige and to be obliged by them.

To conclude; let us *not despise the poor*, since there are many of them who will in *Christ's computation* be found eminently *rich in good works;* many whose *mite* will, *in the treasury of God*, have the value of a *talent*, and will condemn the sordid parsimony with which many of the *rich* and great have *cast their presents into it:* while what the latter part with *out of their abundance* bears no proportion in the account of God to what the former freely spare *from their necessity.* Happy is it for every truly pious and benevolent mind that it is to give up its final account to him *who searches the heart*, and who is witness to those devout and charitable *purposes* which will always stretch themselves out beyond the limit of *actions*, and engage the charitable soul to wish more good than the power and revenues even of kingdoms could effect.

How evidently necessary is the operation of Divine grace to conquer the *prejudices* of a sinful heart; since even the *preaching* of *Christ* himself, enforced by all his stupendous *miracles*, could not overcome those prejudices without it! And how cautious should sinners be that they do not *stop their ears* to the joyful sound of the gospel, and *shut their eyes* against its glorious light; lest God should leave them to their own delusions, and in his righteous judgment *seal them up* under final blindness and impenitence! Then will they never *be converted and healed;* but die with that poison in all the faculties of their souls, which will make them for ever restless and miserable.

Can we find words sufficient to express the madness of these *Pharisees*, who, while they were in their consciences convinced that *Jesus was the Christ*, *would not confess* that conviction, and publicly pay their homage to him, *because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God?* Strange infatuation of the human mind! that it should be capable of believing *there is a God,* and yet of preferring the *creatures* before him: and

should sometimes imagine the vain breath of popular applause or popular censure so considerable, as that God should be offended to please man; and all the honours and rewards of his heavenly presence lost, to secure a little regard from those who are perishing in their crimes, and will ere long be themselves the objects of *everlasting shame and contempt.*

JOHN XII. 44—50.

But Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

Most important is that *proclamation* which *our Lord* made in the *temple*, and is still making to us in his word: *believing in him, we believe in the Father;* and *seeing him, we see the Father.* Let us be ready therefore to receive him out of regard to his Divine authority, as well as with a view to our own happiness; for without him we can have no access unto *the Father*, nor can we ever see him as a reconciled God.—The sacred *light* which he diffuses around him is not intended merely to amuse our eyes with pleasing speculations, but to animate our hearts with holy affections, and to *guide our feet into the way of peace.* (Luke i. 79.) If we desire therefore to escape an *abode in* eternal *darkness*, and to see light everlasting, let us faithfully follow him: otherwise we are *condemned already*, and *that word which he spake* will become to us *a savour of death unto death*, (2 Cor. ii. 16,) and will *judge us in the last* solemn and dreadful *day*, when it shall sentence those who would not be saved by it.

Let us now make *that word* the rule of our life which shall then be rule of our judgment. We may most comfortably venture our

eternal all on the exact veracity of it. *Christ* has perfectly fulfilled the *commission* he received from *his Father*, as one that was *faithful to him that appointed him;* and stands so completely approved in his sight, that our only hope is that we also may be accepted in him, and find mercy and grace for his sake.

SECTION LXXVII.

Matt. xxiii. 1—30.

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders, but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men. They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no *man* your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, *even* Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

But woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in *yourselves*, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Woe unto you, *ye* blind guides, which say, whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. *Ye* fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. *Ye* fools and blind: for whether *is* greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear. (Prov. xxv. 12.) *Christ* was indeed *a wise* and faithful *Reprover;* but the *ears* of these *Pharisees* were disobedient and *uncircumcised.* Let *us*, however, who are *his disciples*, attend to these instructions of our heavenly Master, and avoid every thing which has the remotest tendency to what he here condemns with so just a severity

Let not our zeal spend itself upon the *externals* of religion. Let us not impose *heavy burdens* upon each other; nor lay down rules for the conduct of others, by which we do not in like circumstances think fit to govern ourselves. Let us not impose our own *decisions* in a magisterial manner on our *fellow Christians*, nor affect to be *called fathers*, *masters*, and *teachers;* remembering that *Christ alone is our Master*, and *God our Father*, and that it is a dangerous presumption and folly to set ourselves in the place of either. Let us be upon our guard against that *vain ostentation* that would lead us to place any part of our happiness in *precedence*, and to value ourselves upon our *rank*, or upon any airy *titles of honour*, by which, perhaps rather by accident than merit, we are distinguished from others; and which to a truly wise man, and especially to a humble follower of *Jesus*, will appear to be a very little matter. Let us desire *that honour* which arises from condescending to others, and serving them in love; *that ho-*

nour which springs from the *Divine approbation*, which it will be impossible to secure without unaffected piety. (John v. 44.)

God forbid that our *devotions* should ever be intended as a *cloak of malicousness*, or as the instrument of serving any mean and vile purpose! Such *prayers* would return in *curses* on our own heads, and draw down on them *aggravated damnation*. God forbid that we should spend that time, and that ardency of spirit, in *making proselytes* to our own peculiar notions and party, which ought to be laid out in making them the *servants of God* through *Christ!* God forbid that we should delude ourselves or others by such idle *distinctions* in matters of conscience, as these which our blessed *Redeemer* has with so much reason and spirit exposed!

Let us retain the greatest reverence for an *oath*, and not accustom ourselves to *trifle* with any thing which looks like it. Let us consider *heaven* as *the throne of God*, and often think of the majesty and glory of that illustrious Being *that sits thereon;* for a sense of his continual presence will form us to a better temper, and engage us with a *righteousness* far *exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees*, to walk before him *in all his commandments and ordinances blameless.*

SECTION LXXVIII.

Matthew xxiii. 23—39.

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. *Ye* blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. *Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's*

bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. *Ye* serpents, *ye* generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and *some* of them ye shall kill and crucify; and *some* of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute *them* from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

May we ever remember how necessary it is that our *righteousness* should *exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees*, if we desire to *enter into the kingdom of heaven!* (Matt. v. 20.) May our zeal be employed on the great *essentials* of religion, *justice*, *mercy*, and *fidelity*, and not be laid out merely or chiefly on the *circumstantials* of it!

May we be concerned about the *purity of our hearts*, and not merely attend to the decency of our *external behaviour!* May we be, not like *painted sepulchres*, fair and *beautiful without*, and *full of all uncleanness within;* but rather like the *vessel* laid up

before the Lord, whose *outside* shone with polished *gold*, while *within it* was replenished with heavenly *manna!* (Heb. ix. 4.)

How many, like these *Pharisees*, condemn *persecution*, and yet themselves are chargeable with the guilt of it! May that never be our character, lest we be *judged out of our own mouths*, and lest we thereby *fill up the measure of our iniquities!*

Behold the repeated tenderness of our compassionate *Redeemer* even towards that guilty *city that killed the prophets, and stoned the messengers of God!* He *would* with the gentlest and most solicitous care *have gathered them, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings!* Thus does he still call and invite perishing sinners. O that the *obstinacy* of their own perverse and rebellious *wills* may not finally withstand all the overtures of his grace; lest eternal *desolation* be their portion, and they in vain *wish* for the repetition of those *calls* which they once so wantonly despised!

SECTION LXXIX.

Matt. xxiv. 1—14. Mark xiii. 1—13. Luke xxi. 5—19.

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to *him* to shew him the buildings of the temple; and some spake, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts; and one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!* And Jesus answering said unto him, See ye not all these things? these great buildings? Verily I say unto you, *as for* these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, the disciples Peter and James and John and Andrew came unto him privately, and asked him, saying, Master, but tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ; and the time draweth near; and shall deceive many: go ye not therefore after them. And ye shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars. And when ye shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars, and commotions, see that ye be not terrified, *and* troubled: for all these things must first come to pass; but the end *shall* not *be* yet. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and troubles, and fearful sights; and great signs shall there be from heaven; all these *are* the beginnings of sorrows. But take heed to yourselves; for before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute *you*, and deliver you up to councils, and to the synagogues, and into prisons, to be afflicted; and in the synagogues, ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my name's sake; and they shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.—And it shall turn to you for a testimony against them. But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, settle *it* therefore in your hearts, *and* take no thought before-hand what he shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. For I will give you a mouth of wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against *their* parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends: and *some* of you shall they cause to be put to death. But there shall not a hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive

many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

The whole of this prophecy most evidently shews us how vain and dangerous it is to trust in external privileges, and to cry out, as these foolish and wretched *Jews* did, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these* buildings; when of this stately and magnificent structure, within less than half a century after it was finished, *not one stone was left on another* undemolished.

So particular a prediction, when compared with the event, must surely confirm our faith in *Christ*, as the great Prophet which was to come into the world. And we shall see reason to admire the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence in giving us, almost by a miraculous preservation of the author, such a *commentary* on this prophecy as is delivered down to us in the *works of Josephus*, the *Jewish* historian, which throw a much stronger light upon it than if they had been written by a *Christian* on purpose to illustrate it.

Let us bless God that our own eyes have not seen such *desolations* and *ruins*, such *commotions* in the natural and moral world, such *dissentions*, in civil life, such *persecutions* and *hatreds* amongst the nearest *relatives*, under the pretence of propagating *religion;* which, however propagated, is nothing without that *love* which is so often made the first victim to it.

Yet too plainly do we see, in one form or another, *iniquity abounding and the love of many waxing cold.* Let us endeavour to revive on our own hearts a deep and lasting impression of Divine things: and remember, whenever we are tempted to let go our integrity, that it is *he* alone *who endures to the end* that *shall be saved.*

Whatever our trials are, let us cheerfully confide in the protection of *Divine Providence;* nor let us despair of those continued influences of the blessed *Spirit* which may animate us to the most difficult services, and support us under the most painful sufferings. Let us therefore *in patience possess our* own *souls*, and maintain that composure and steadiness of spirit, as those that know how much more valuable it is than any enjoyment which can be taken away, or any temporal interest which can be brought into question.

SECTION LXXX.

MATT. XXIV. 15—28. MARK XIII. 14—23.
LUKE XXI. 20—24.

AND when ye therefore shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh, *that is*, the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto; and let him which is on the house-top not come down into the house, neither enter *therein* to take any thing out of his house; and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day. For in those days shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, no, nor ever shall be. For there shall be great distress in the land, affliction and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, those days shall be shortened. And then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here *is* Christ; or, lo, *he is* there; believe *him* not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and *shall* shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the

very elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, *he is* in the secret chambers; believe *it* not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west: so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

If *our Lord* urges his *disciples*, with such speedy and solicitous haste, to *flee* from the sword of God's *temporal judgments*, how much greater diligence should we give to *flee from the wrath to come!* What are any of the *little interests of life*, that out of regard to them we should be willing to continue one moment longer exposed to a danger which may sink us into everlasting perdition and despair!

We have here a lively description of that aggravated *ruin* which was brught upon the *Jews* for neglecting *Christ;* even *great tribulation, such as* had never, *from the* very *beginning of the world*, fallen upon any other nation, *nor shall ever be* equalled. Thus was *his blood upon them, and their children.* (Matt. xxvii. 25.) May we never know what it is to have *this blood* crying against us for *trampling it under foot as an unholy thing!* (Heb. x. 29.) For surely to the *Jews*, who *thus rejected the counsel of God against themselves, all these things* which they suffered were but *the beginning of sorrows;* and the *famine* and *sedition, pestilence* and *slaughter*, by which so many thousands perished, served only to consign them over to infinitely more terrible *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*, which will at last fall *on every soul of man that doeth evil*, whether *Jew* or *Gentile.* (Rom. ii. 8, 9.)

These unhappy creatures eagerly listened to the very name of a *Messiah*, by whomsoever it was assumed; while they rejected him whom God had sent them, and who had so long, and with so much importunity, been renewing to them the offers of life and salvation. May none of us ever know the sad impatience with which condemned sinners will wish, and wish in vain, for those overtures and messages of grace which they now despise! In that sense, *wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together:* wherever there is the like unbelief and impenitence, there will be in its degree the like ruin. *Christ* has graciously *told us these things before:* may we humbly attend to the warning, that none of this terror and destruction may ever come upon us.

SECTION LXXXI.

MATTHEW XXIV. 29—36. MARK XIII. 24—32.
LUKE XXI. 25—33.

BUT immediately after the tribulation of those days there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars. The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven; and upon the earth shall be distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And then shall he send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

And he spake unto them a parable, *saying*, Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; Behold, the fig-tree and all the trees. When their branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away: But of that day and that hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but my Father only.

Let us now raise our contemplations to that awful day when all that was *figuratively* spoken of *the destruction of Jerusalem* shall be *literally* accomplished; and let us consider our own intimate concern in it. Where will our hope and comfort, our light, and our safety be, when *the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light*, when *the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken?* where, indeed, unless the almighty *God*, the everlasting *Jehovah*, by whose voice they were created, and by whose hand they shall be dashed in pieces again, shall condescend to be *our light, and our salvation* (Ps. xxviii.1.) And if he indeed be so, *then* we may *lift up our heads* with joy; as knowing that our complete *redemption draweth nigh*, even that long expected *day* which, with all its solemn horrors, has still been the brightest object of our faith and our hopes.

Then shall *the Son of man* indeed *come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory*, and *send his angels* to summon *his elect*, and to assemble them *from one end of heaven to the other; for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.* (1 Thess. iv. 16.) May we hear the summons with joy, and *stand in our lot* among his chosen ones! What though the *day* and *season* be *unknown?* It is enough for us that we know that all these interposing days and years, be they ever so numerous, will at length be past; for the *promise* of the great Redeemer is our security, and he *will hasten it in his time.* (Isa. lx. 22.)

These visible *heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the earth shall be removed* out of its place; but the sure *word of his promise shall never pass away;* even that *promise* which is engaged for the salvation of his people. Let us often review it: let us firmly realize it to our souls, and, *seeing we look for such things*, let us seriously consider *what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness.* (2 Pet. iii. 11, 14.)

SECTION LXXXII.

MATTHEW XXIV. 37—51. MARK XIII. 33—37.
LUKE XXI. 34—36.

AND take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. But as the days of Noe *were*, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left: two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

Take ye heed; watch therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. For ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man cometh.

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed *is* that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say

unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite *his* fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of; and shall cut him asunder, and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

What slothful hearts must we have if these *repeated admonitions* do not awaken us; even *line upon line, and precept upon precept?* The *patience of God is waiting* upon us, as it did on the old world, *while the ark was preparing*. (1 Peter iii. 20.) May we take the warning, and seek shelter before the door be shut against us! Let us therefore *take heed, lest sensualities and secular cares overcharge* and depress *our hearts*, and amuse us with vain delusions, till *sudden* and unavoidable *destruction* come upon us. (1 Thess. v. 3.)

We are by profession the *domestics* of *Christ*. Let us attend to the *offices* he has assigned us, though he seem at a distance. Let us diligently *wait his coming*, at whatever season. Let his *ministers* especially wait it; and be solicitous, that they may be *found so doing*, conducting themselves like *wise stewards of the mysteries of God*, dispensing to every one his portion of *food in due season*. Then will our *account* be honourable, and our *reward* glorious.

May God deliver us from the guilt and condemnation of the cruel, and imperious, and the luxurious *servant*, who *began to beat his fellows, and to eat and drink with the drunken;* since we are expressly told his dreadful doom! Justly does *our Lord* declare that to such a one he will *appoint a portion with hypocrites,* terrible as their portion must be; for no hypocrisy can be baser than to call ourselves the *servants* and *ministers of Christ*, while we are the slaves of ambition, avarice, and intemperance. Wherever such are found, under whatever mask and form, may he reform them by his grace, or disarm them of that power and influence which they continually abuse to his dishonour, and to their own aggravated damnation! Let us in the mean time be *exhorting each other daily, while it is called to-day, lest any* by insensible degrees *be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*; (Heb.

iii. 13;) and let us always remember that every exhortation which we give to others returns with redoubled weight upon ourselves.

SECTION LXXXIII.

Matthew xxv. 1—13.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. They that were foolish, took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, *Not so;* lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came: and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Let us apply our hearts to the obvious instructions which this well-known *parable* so naturally suggests. We are under a *religious profession:* our *lamps* are in our hands: and we *go forth* as those that expect *to meet Christ;* as those that desire and hope to be admitted to the *marriage-supper of the Lamb.* But, alas, how few are there that are truly *prepared* for such a blessedness! Would to God there were reason to hope that the *Christian church* were so equally divided, that *five* of *ten* in it had the *oil* of Divine grace in their hearts, to render them *burning and shining lights!*

Let even such as have it be upon their guard; for *our Lord* intimates that *the wise* as well as *the foolish virgins* are too apt to *slumber and sleep*, and carelessly to intermit that *watch* which they ought constantly to maintain. There may be, at an unexpected time, *a midnight cry*. Happy the souls that can hear it with pleasure; being not only habitually but actually *ready* to obey the summons! Happy they that have their *loins girded*, and their *lamps burning!* (Luke xii. 35.)

The foolish virgins saw their error too late; they applied to *the wise:* but their application was vain. And as vain will the hope of those be who trust to the *intercession* of *departed saints*, or any supposed redundancy of *merit in them*, while they are themselves strangers to a holy temper and life. In vain will they cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us. The door* of mercy will be *shut* for ever, and the *workers of iniquity* utterly disowned. The *day of grace* has its limits; and for those that have trifled it away there remaineth nothing *but the blackness of darkness for ever!* (Jude 13.)

SECTION LXXXIV.

Matthew xxv. 14—30.

For *the kingdom of heaven is* as a man travelling into a far country, *who* called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made *them* other five talents. And likewise he that *had received* two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler

over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents, came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast *that is* thine. His lord answered and said unto him, *thou* wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and *then* at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give *it* unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

What can excite us to a becoming care and activity in the duties of life, if we are deaf to those various and important motives which this excellent *parable* suggests? We have each of us received our *talents*, whether *five*, or *two*, or *one;* and if we be *faithful*, it matters not much under which of these classes we fall. Our acceptance and reward will be proportionable to our diligence; nor will any be blamed because he has not *received five*, though many will be condemned for *neglecting one.*

Yet a little while, and *our Lord comes to reckon with us*, and even now his eye is continually upon us. Let us ask our own souls, with what temper, with what courage, with what cheerfulness, shall we appear before him? Let us think of *that appearance* with awe, but not with terror. Away with every *unjust thought* and reasoning, (with whatever artifice it be excused, with whatever honourable name it be dignified) that would represent him as *a rigorous and severe Master*, and pro-

duce a servile dread, which would cut the sinews of industry, and sink the soul into a sullen negligent despair.

Whatever our particular snares in life may be, let us think of the *doom* of the *slothful servant*, to awaken our souls, and to deter us from every degree of unfaithfulness. And, on the other hand, let us often reflect on that unutterable transport which will overflow the breast of every real *Christian*, when his gracious *Master* shall condescend, in so honourable a manner, to commemorate his honest, though feeble, attempts of service; and shall say, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!* May *that joy* be the great object of our hopes and pursuits! and may our daily care in the improvement of every *talent* lodged in our hands be a token to us that it will be sure and great!

SECTION LXXXV.

Matt. xxv. 31—46.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; For I was an-hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an-hungered, and fed *thee?* or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? or naked, and clothed *thee?* or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the

least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an-hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an-hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Let us now behold, with an attentive eye and a solicitous heart, *the end of all the living;* that awful scene, in which the various dispensations of God to mankind shall terminate in the solemn day, *when the Son of man shall come in his glory*, and *sit on his* magnificent *throne. All nations* and people *shall be assembled before him*, and *we* must make up a part of the assembly. *The sheep* and the *goats* must then be *separated:* and, O my soul, amongst which wilt thou then be numbered? Is there an inquiry, is there a care, of greater, of equal, of comparable importance?

Let us view the *sentence* we must shortly hear, as *he* who will himself pronounce it has been pleased to give us a copy of it. Can we conceive any thing more dreadful than *that* which shall be passed on *those on the left-hand;* to be driven from the presence of *Christ* as *accursed*, and to be consigned over to a devouring *fire!* and this is not only to the tortures of a moment, or an hour, (as in some painful executions that have been known here,) but to *everlasting fire*, yea, to fire *prepared for the devil and his angels*, where they will be perpetual companions, and perpetual tormentors! should not the thought that he is in danger, in hourly danger, of being sealed up under this sentence, awaken the most stupid sinner, and engage him eagerly to cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?*—And *on whom* is this sentence passed? Let us attentively observe it! Not merely on the most gross and abandoned sinners, but on those who have lived in an habitual neglect of their duty: not merely on those who have ravaged and persecuted the saints (though surely

their furnace will be *heated seven times hotter* than that of others,) but even on those who have *neglected to relieve them.*

On the other hand, let us seriously reflect what it will be to be owned by *Christ* before the assembled world; and to hear him saying with a sweet smile, and with a voice of harmony and love, *Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* How infinite is the love that prepared that kingdom for us before we had a being! how rich the blood that purchased it! how overflowing the grace that bestows it on such mean, such undeserving creatures! *Bless the Lord, O our souls,* in the prospect of it! *Let men curse,* O Lord, if *thou* wilt thus *bless.* (Psalm cix. 28.) Let them load our names with infamy if thou wilt adorn them with such glory: let all the kingdoms of the earth, and all the pomp of them, be despised and trampled under foot, when offered as an equivalent for this infinitely more glorious kingdom.

Let us attentively observe *the character* of those who are to receive it. They are the useful and benevolent souls: such as have *loved the Lord Jesus Christ,* not only in his name, and ordinances, and promises, but have loved him in his laws, and in *his people* too; and have known him in those humble forms in which he has been pleased, as it were *by proxy,* to appear among us. *I was hungry, and ye fed me; thirsty, and ye gave me drink.* &c.; for *in as much as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.* Amazing words! that the *meanest saint* should be owned by the *King of glory* as one of *his brethren!* Irresistible argument to those that do indeed believe these words, to stir them up to abound *in every good word and work!* Under this impression, methinks, instead of *hiding ourselves* from those who should be to us *as our own flesh* by virtue of our common union to him, we should not only hearken to their entreaties, but even *search them out* in those corners to which modest want may sometimes retire, and cast about in our thoughts how we may secure any happy opportunity of relieving some poor *saint, for their sakes,* and *for their Master's,* and even *for our own.* What if *Christ* came to us in person as a poor helpless *stranger?* What if we saw him *destitute of food* and *raiment,* or in want of any other necessaries of life? Should we not contend for it as an honour, which of us should *receive him into our houses,* which of us should *entertain him at our table,* which of us should even strip ourselves of *our clothing* to give it to him? And yet he tells us that he is in effect with us *in his poor members;* and we invent a thousand cold excuses for neglecting to assist him, and send our compassionate *Saviour* away empty. Is this the temper of a *Christian?* Is this the temper in which we should wish to be found at the judgment-day?

But *we know not Christ* in this disguise. Neither did these unhappy creatures *on the left-hand* know him : they are surprised to be told of such a thing ; and yet are represented as perishing for it. Away therefore with all *those religious hopes* (vainly so called) which leave the heart hardened, and the hand contracted from good works ! *If we shut up the bowels of compassion from our brethren, how dwelleth the love of God in us ?* (1 John iii. 17.) Or to what doth the *love of Christ constrain us*, if it be not to the exercise of gratitude to him, and the offices of cheerful and active friendship to those whom he now owns as *his brethren*, and whom he will not be ashamed to call so in the midst of his highest triumph ? *Blessed Jesus*, how munificent art thou ! and what a fund of *charity* didst thou lay up in the very words which are now before us ! In all ages since they were spoken, how many *hungry* hast thou *fed*, how many *naked* hast thou *clothed*, how many calamitous creatures hast thou *relieved* by them ! May they be written deep in our hearts, that the joy with which we shall finally meet thee may be increased by the happy effect of this day's meditation !

SECTION LXXXVI.

MATT. XXVI. 1—4, 14—16. MARK XIV. 1, 2, 10, 11. LUKE XXI. 37, 38. XXII. 1—6.

AND it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is *the feast of* the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

Then assembled together the chief priests, and the Scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted and sought how they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast-*day*, lest there be an uproar among the people ; for they feared the people.

Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve ; and he went his way unto the chief priests and captains, and communed with them how he might betray him unto them : and

when they heard *it*, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And *he* said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? and they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And he promised, and from that time he sought opportunity how he might conveniently betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

LUKE XXI. 37, 38.

And in the day-time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called *the mount* of Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

We see with what unremitting vigour the great *Author and Finisher of our faith* pressed forward *towards the mark*, and how he quickened his pace, as he *saw the day approaching*; spending in devotion the greatest part of *the night*, which succeeded to his most laborious days, and resuming his work *early in the morning!* How much happier were *his disciples* in these early lectures than the slumbers of the morning could have made them on their beds! Let us not scruple to deny ourselves the indulgence of unnecessary sleep, that we may come *morning after morning* to place ourselves at his feet, and lose no opportunity of receiving the instructions of his word, and seeking those of his Spirit.

But while his gracious heart was thus intent on doing good, *the chief priests and rulers of the people* were no less intent on mischief and murder. They *took counsel together how they might put him to death.* They set upon his head *the price of a slave*, and find *an apostle* base enough to accept it. Blush, *O ye heavens*, to have been witness to this; and be ashamed, *O earth*, to have supported so infamous a creature! Yet this was the man who but a few days before was the foremost to appear as an *advocate for the poor*, and to censure the pious zeal of *Mary*, which *our Lord* vindicated and applauded. (John xii. 4—8.) Let the fatal fruits of his covetous disposition, instigated by *Satan*, be marked with abhorrence and terror; and if we see this base principle harboured in the breasts of those who call themselves the *disciples and ministers of Christ*, let us not wonder if by God's righteous judgment they are given up to those excesses of it which bring upon them lasting infamy and endless perdition.

SECTION LXXXVII.

MATT. XXVI. 17—20. MARK XIV. 12—17.
LUKE XXII. 7—18.

Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed, the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare for thee that thou maysst eat the passover? And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, Peter and John, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in; and wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house: the Master saith unto thee, My time is at hand, I will keep the passover at thy house; where is the guest-chamber where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. And his disciples went forth and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and *they* did as *he* had appointed them, and they made ready the passover.

MATT. XXVI. 20. MARK XIV. 17. LUKE XXII. 14—18.

And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. And when the hour was come he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide *it* among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

We may well assure ourselves, that the same Divine penetration and prophetic discernment which enabled the blessed *Jesus*

thus circumstantially to *foretel* to his disciples those most *contingent occurrences* which were to determine *the place* where they should *prepare the passover*, would also open to him a prospect of all that was to follow. All the scenes that were to be passed through on this fatal night, and the succeeding black and bloody day, were, no doubt, attentively viewed: the *agony* of the *garden*, the traitorous *kiss* of *Judas*, the cowardly *flight* of all the other *apostles*, the *insults* of his seemingly victorious and successful *enemies*, the clamorous *accusations*, the insolent *buffetings*, the *scourges*, the *thorns*, the *nails*, the *cross*, and all that he has to endure upon it from the hand of God and men. Yet behold, with all these in his view, he goes on with a holy alacrity, and this *sun of righteousness, rejoiceth as a champion to run his race!* (Psalm xix. 5.) Yea, when he is sitting down to the *paschal supper*, (though therein was exhibited, in a most lively emblem, the bitterness of his own sufferings,) he utters these gracious and emphatical words, *With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.*

SECTION LXXXVIII.

John xiii. 1—17.

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciple's feet, and wipe *them* with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no

part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands, and *my* head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master, and Lord; and ye say well, for *so* I am. If I then *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

But let us turn our eyes to him whom we justly *call* our *Teacher* and our *Lord;* for surely, if any thing can effect a cure, it must be actions and words like these. The great *Heir of all things*, invested with universal dominion, and just *returning to his heavenly Father* to undertake the administration of it: in what a *habit*, in what an *attitude*, do we see him! Whom would a stranger have taken for the *lowest* of the company, but him who was *high* over all created nature? Blessed *Jesus*, it was not so much any personal attachment to these thy servants, as a regard to the edification of thy whole church, which engaged thee to this astonishing action: that all thy *ministers*, that all thy *people*, in conformity to *thy example*, might learn a readiness to *serve each other* in love!

But why are we so slow to receive this lesson? And why is our practice often so contrary to it? Surely to cleanse us from these dregs of pride and carnality we need in a spiritual sense to be *washed* by him. Let us gladly submit to that *washing*, if we desire to secure *any part in him.* Which of us in this view may not see reason to cry out with *Peter*, *Lord, not* our *feet only, but also* our *hands and* our *head?* May our whole nature be thus purified! and, warmly emulous of conforming to so bright an *example*, may we ever be maintaining a watchfulness over our own spirits, correcting the first appearances of irregularity, and washing away every lightest stain which our *feet* may contract in this various journey! So shall we be *great* in the sight and favour of

our Master; and, numbering ourselves among the *least* of his *servants*, shall be distinguished by peculiar honours, in proportion to the degree in which we think ourselves most unworthy of them.

SECTION LXXXIX.

MATT. XXVI. 21—26. MARK XIV. 18—22. LUKE XXII. 19—23. JOHN XIII. 18—30. 1 COR. XI. 23, 24.

AND as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me *is* with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined; but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am *he*. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.

When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and as they sat and did eat, *he* testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you which eateth with me shall betray me. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake; and they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing; And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him one by one, Lord, is it I? And another said, *Is* it I? And he answered and said unto them, *It is* one of the twelve, that dippeth *his* hand with me in the dish; the same shall betray me. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the

Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast, saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped *it*. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave *it* to Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some *of them* thought because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy *those things* that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said. He then having received the sop, went immediately out: and it was night.

It is a melancholy reflection, that there should be any one in this select company, to whom this endearing promise did not belong; especially one who, having *eaten of Christ's bread* should in such a sense and degree as *Judas, lift up his heel against him.* Deliver us, *O Lord*, from any share in that guilt! We are treated as *thy friends;* we are set *at thy table:* let us not ungratefully *kick against thee*, while *the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib.* (Isaiah i. 3.)

If we would not do it, let us be *jealous* over ourselves *with a godly jealousy.* Happy they whose *hearts* witness to their sincerity in the presence of him that searches them, and can *cheerfully* say, *Lord, is it I?* Let them say it *humbly* too; lest the infirmity of nature prevail upon them beyond their present purpose or apprehension, and lead them on to do that, the very thought of which they would now abhor.

How artfully must *Judas* have conducted himself, when on such an intimation no particular *suspicion* appears to have fallen on him! But how vain is that artifice, be it ever so refined, which, while it preserves a character in the sight of men, cannot in the least degree impose upon *Christ!* The day will come when he will lay open the false and ungrateful *hypocrite*,

in a more overwhelming manner than that in which he here exposed *Judas;* and whatever advantage he may have gained, either by professing religion, or by betraying it, he will undoubtedly find that *it had been good for him that he had never been born.*

One would have imagined that an admonition like this, which laid bare the secrets of his heart, and warned him so plainly and faithfully of his danger, might have wrought some remorse in his heart, or at least have proved some impediment to the immediate execution of his design; but, being now given up by the righteous judgment of God to the influence of *Satan*, and the lust of his own depraved mind, he is exasperated, rather than reclaimed by it; and *immediately goes forth*, under the covert of the *night*, to hasten the accomplishment of that work of darkness, the consequences of which had been so awfully represented. *O Lord*, let thy grace and thy love do that for us which thy terrors alone cannot do! Let our hearts be melted by that nobler principle, and taught to abhor every thing which would displease thee! Oh, let them flow forth into such workings of *compassion* to the afflicted as engaged the blessed *Jesus* to relieve *the poor* out of his own little stock; and into those sentiments of *candour* which would not permit the *apostles*, even after this admonition, to imagine *Judas* altogether so bad as indeed he was, but led them to put the mildest construction on their Master's ambiguous address to him! Such may our *mistakes* be, wherever we do mistake; the errors of a *charity*, which would not by excessive rigour injure the vilest sinner, and much less the least and weakest of God's servants!

SECTION XC.

John xiii. 31—38.

Therefore when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By

this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterward. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

In this instance, as in all others, let us be mindful of the dying *charge*, the *new commandment* of our dear *Lord;* and let us shew upon all occasions this distinguishing *badge* of our relation to him, even our *love to each other*. So will our profession be adorned, and *the Son of man* be farther *glorified*, by the conduct of his servants on earth: so shall he at length *glorify us with himself*, and after a short absence call us to *follow him* into those regions of perfect love which must of course be the seats of everlasting joy.

In the mean time, send down, O gracious *Emmanuel*, thy *Spirit of love* on all thy followers; that we may no longer glory in the little distinctions of this or that *party*, but may *shew we are Christians* by this resplendent ensign of our order! May we bind it on our shoulders as a mark of honour, and wear it as a crown upon our heads; that the spirit of hatred, reproach, and persecution may vanish like an unwholesome mist before the sun, and it may again be universally said, as of old, *Behold, how these Christians love one another!* Amen.

SECTION XCI.

Luke xxii. 24—38.

And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye *shall* not *be* so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and

he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether *is* greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? *is* not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he might sift *you* as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and script, and shoes, lacked ye any thing; and they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take *it*, and likewise *his* script: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. And they said, Lord, behold, here *are* two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

What a mournful reflection is it that corrupt nature should still prevail so far, even in the hearts of such pious men as the *apostles* in the main were, that after so long a converse with *Christ* they should still be so unlike him, and bring their eager *contentions about superiority*, in a state of temporal grandeur they were never to see, into the last hours they spent with their Master, and even to one of the most holy and solemn *ordinances* of religion! Such are the vain dreams of *ambition*, and with such empty shadows does it amuse the deluded mind.

Who would not gladly *continue with Christ* in the strictest fidelity, amidst all the *trials* which can arise, when he observes how liberally he repays his servants, and how graciously he seems to relish his own honours the more in proportion to the

degree in which those honours are shared with them; *appointing* them a glorious *kingdom*, and erecting *thrones* for each of them! And surely, though the *apostles of the Lamb* are to have their peculiar dignity in the great day of his triumph, there is a sense in which he will perform *to every one that overcometh* that yet more condescending promise, *I will grant* him to *sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.* (Rev. iii. 21.) Let our souls in that confidence be strengthened to all the labours and sufferings to which he may call us forth.

Alas, how ready are we to forget ourselves; and how much safer are we in *Christ's* hands than in our own! How frequently do we *resolve* like *Peter*, and in how many instances do we *fall* like him! We see the malice of *Satan*, and how eagerly he *desired* to try the *apostles*, and even to *sift* them *as wheat;* we see also the gracious care of our *Redeemer*, who, foreseeing the danger of his servants, laid in an unsought remedy, to which they respectively owed their security, or their recovery.

Let us rejoice that the great enemy is under such restraints, and can have no power against us, unless by *permission* from above. Let us rejoice that *Christ* is a constant and invariable Friend to his people; and still appears as an *Advocate with the Father*, and as a tender faithful *Shepherd*, watching over them for good, while *Satan* is *seeking to devour them.* (1 Pet. v. 8. If at any time that adversary *get an advantage* over us, let us endeavour in the strength of Divine grace an immediate recovery; and *when restored*, let us exert ourselves to *strengthen our brethren:* for surely it is most reasonable that we, who are *surrounded with* such various, and such sensible *infirmities, should have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.* (Hebrews v 2.)

SECTION XCII.

MATT. XXVI. 27—29. MARK XIV. 23—25. LUKE XXII. 20. 1 COR. XI. 25.

LIKEWISE also after supper he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; and they all drank of it. This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins. This do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. Verily I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Let us now review, with most thankful acknowledgment, this gracious *legacy* of our dying *Redeemer*, this reviving and nourishing *ordinance*, which he instituted for the benefit of his church *the same night in which he was betrayed.* (1 Cor. xi. 23.) So tenderly did his love for them prevail when his heart was full of his own sorrows! May we always consider to what purpose this holy rite was ordained; and as we shall see the wisdom of the appointment, so we shall also be both awakened to attend to it, and assisted in that attendance!

It is the *memorial* of the *death of Christ*, by which we represent it to others, and to ourselves. May we be ever ready to give this most regular and acceptable token, that *we are not ashamed to fight under the banner of a crucified Redeemer!* It is also the *seal* of the *new covenant in his blood.* Let us adore the grace that formed and ratified that *everlasting covenant*, so well *ordered in all things*, and so *sure.* (2 Samuel xxiii. 5.) And whenever we approach to this *sealing ordinance* may we renew our consent to the demands of that *covenant*, and our expectation of those blessings which are conveyed by it! a *consent* and *expectation* so well suited to the circumstance of its being ratified by the *blood of Jesus.* Thus may every attendance nourish our souls in grace, and ripen them for glory; that at length all may be fulfilled and perfected *in the kingdom of God.*

In the mean time may God, by the influence of his Spirit, give to all professing *Christians* right notions of this *ordinance*, and a due regard for it; that, on the one hand, none may, under the specious pretence of honouring it, live in the *habitual neglect* of so plain and important a duty; and that, on the other, it may never be *profanely invaded* by those who have no concern about the blessings of that *covenant* it ratifies, and impiously prostitute it to those secular views, above which it was intended to raise them! And may none that honour the great Author of it encourage such an abuse, lest they seem to lay the very *cross of Christ* as the threshold to the temple of those various *idols* to which ambitious and interested men are bowing down their souls!

SECTION XCIII.

John xiv. 1—14.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare

a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest: and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I *am* in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very work's sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater *works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do *it*.

We see in the beginning of this *section* that care of Christ over his servants which may engage us cheerfully to trust him for providential supplies, when employed in his work; so we see in the remainder of this, and in the following discourses, the most affectionate discoveries of the very heart of our blessed *Redeemer*, overflowing in every sentence with the kindest concern, not only for the safety but the comfort of his people. We see a lively image of that tenderness with which he will another day *wipe away all tears from their eyes*. (Rev. vii. 17.) Surely when he uttered these words he was also solicitous that *our hearts* might *not be troubled:* and therefore has provided a noble cordial, the strength of which shall continue to the remotest ages, even *faith in his Father and in him*. Oh may that blessed principle be confirmed by what we have now been reading!

Let us observe with what a holy familiarity *our Lord* speaks of the regions of glory; not, as his servants do, like one dazzled and

overwhelmed with the brightness of the idea; but as accustomed and familiarized to it by his high birth. *In my Father's house are many mansions;* (delightful and reviving thought!) and many inhabitants in them, whom we hope through grace will be our companions there, and every one of them increase and multiply the joy.

It was not for the *apostles* alone that *Christ* went to *prepare a place:* he is *entered* into heaven as *our Forerunner*, (Heb. vi. 20;) and we, if we are believers indeed, may be said, by virtue of our union with him, to *sit together in heavenly places in him.* (Eph. ii. 6.) Let us continually be tending thither, in more affectionate desires and more ardent pursuits. *We know the way;* we hear *the truth;* oh may we also feel *the life! By Christ*, as the *true and living way*, may we *come to the Father;* that we may have *eternal life*, in *knowing* him, *the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent!* (John xvii 3.) In *Christ* may we *see him*, and have our eyes and our hearts open to those beams of the Divine glory which are reflected *from the face* of his *only-begotten Son,* who is *full of grace and truth!* (John i. 14.) Has he been thus discovered to us, as *our Father*, and *our God*, let it *suffice us.* Let it diffuse a sacred and lasting pleasure over our souls, though other desirable objects may be veiled or removed; and engage us to maintain a continual *fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* 1 (John i. 3.)

To this we are invited by every declaration of his readiness to hear and answer our *prayers:* and though those *miraculous powers* of the *Spirit* are ceased, whereby the *apostles* were enabled to equal, or even to *exceed*, the works of their Master, yet as we have so many important errands to *the throne of grace*, in which the glory of God and the salvation of our souls is concerned, let us come with a *holy boldness* to it, in dependence on *Jesus*, that great *High Priest over the house of God*, who is *passed into the heavens*, and amidst all the grandeur of that exalted state regards his humble followers on earth, and ever appears under the character of their *Advocate* and their *Friend.*

SECTION XCIV.

JOHN XIV. 15—31.

IF ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more: but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I *am* in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being *yet* present with you. But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come *again* unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater

than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

Surely, if we are not entirely strangers to the Divine life, we cannot read such discourses as these without feeling some warm emotions of *love to Christ;* and if indeed we feel them, let us consider how they are to be expressed. *Our Lord* directs us to do it in the most solid and the most acceptable manner, by a constant care to *keep his commandments;* and surely such *commandments* as *his* cannot be *grievous* to a soul that truly loves him. (1 John v. 3.) The more we live in the practice of them, the more cheerfully may we expect the abundant *communications of his Spirit* to animate and strengthen us.

If we are *Christians* indeed, let us not, in any circumstance of life, look on ourselves as helpless and abandoned *orphans.* Human friends may forsake us; but *Christ will come to us;* he will *manifest himself* to the eye of faith, though to the eye of sense he is invisible; and his heavenly *Father will love us;* and watch over us for good: yea, he *will come and dwell* in the obedient soul by the gracious tokens of his intimate and inseparable presence. And do we any of us experience this? We have surely reason to say that by way of admiration which the *apostle* said by way of inquiry, *Lord, how,* and whence *is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world!* What have we done to deserve these gracious and distinguishing manifestations? Nay, how much have we done to forfeit them! even more than many, from whom they are withheld!

With unutterable joy let us review this rich legacy of our dying Lord: *peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.* Lord, evermore give us *this peace* with God, and with our own consciences! for if *thou* wilt *give quietness, who can make trouble?* (Job xxxiv. 29.) How serenely may we then pass through the most turbulent scenes of life, when all is quiet and harmonious within? Thou hast *made peace through the blood of thy cross,* (Col. i. 20;) may we preserve the precious purchase and inestimable gift inviolate, till it issue in everlasting peace! In this let our *hearts* be encouraged; in this let them *rejoice;* and not in our own happiness alone, but also in that of our own glorified and exalted *Redeemer.* As the members of his body, we ought certainly to maintain a pleasing

sympathy with *our Head*, and to triumph in his honour and felicity as our own. *If we love Christ*, we should *rejoice, because he is gone to the Father.* And the same consideration may in its degree comfort us when our pious friends are removed: if we *love them* with a rational and generous friendship, and are not too much influenced by selfish affections under that specious name, *our joy* for their exaltation will greatly temper the *sorrow* which our loss must give us.

Our Lord uttered these words in the near views of a grievous assault from *the prince of this world*, who is the prince of darkness; but there was *no corruption in him* to take part with the enemy. Too much, alas, does he find *in us* to abet his temptations: let us earnestly pray that the *grace of Christ* may be *sufficient for us;* and that as *his love to the Father* engaged him to go through this painful conflict with the tempter, *his love to us* may make us partakers of his victory. *In his nome* let us *set up our banners;* and the *powers of hell* shall flee before us.

SECTION XCV.

John xv. 1—11.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you:

continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full.

How desirable it is that we may learn from this discourse to *regard Christ*, at all times, as the spiritual *Head*, from whom life and vigour are to be derived to all his people! Let us by the exercise of an unfeigned faith *abide in him as the true vine;* as being always sensible that *without him we can do nothing;* and that if we are *in him* only by an external profession, we are not only in danger of being *cut off*, and *taken away*, but shall in the end *be cast into the fire.* May we rather *be purged* and pruned, though it should be with the most painful dispensations of providence; if by this means our *fruitfulness* may be promoted *to the glory of God*, and to the benefit of the world! May *his word* operate daily upon us, to *cleanse* us from remaining pollutions! and if we thus desire to be *clean*, let us *take heed to our way*, *according to* the tenor of that *word.* (Psalm cxix. 9.)

We see our encouragement to *pray;* let us take it from *Christ*, and not be dismayed, nor yield to unbelieving suspicions. *As the Father has loved Christ, so does he also love* his people. Let us preserve and cultivate this sacred friendship; and, whatever it may cost us, let us endeavour to *continue in his love*, and to avoid whatever would forfeit it; making it above all things our care to *keep his commandments.* *Christ* always observing those of his heavenly *Father*, cannot but always and invariably *continue* the object of *his love* and delight: may our conduct be such as that *he* may see reason to *rejoice in us!* and then *we* shall also have the surest foundation for a sublime and solid *joy.*

SECTION XCVI.

John xv. 12—27.

This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Hence-

forth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things they do unto you for my names' sake, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also.—If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness because ye have been with me from the beginning.

The Son of God condescends to speak under the character of a *Friend*: and with what humble gratitude should we attend to his words! He lays aside the majesty of a sovereign to assume this more tender relation; and surely our overflowing hearts must inquire, blessed *Jesus*, what shall we do to express the friendship on our side? Let us observe what he has here declared. *Ye are my friends* indeed, *if ye do whatever command I you.* Lord, we *will run the way of* these *thy commandments*,

when on this noblest principle *thou shalt enlarge our hearts* (Psalm cxix. 32.)

He has *loved us* with an unexampled affection, which has approved itself *stronger than death;* and, in return he requires us to *love one another.* How gracious a *command!* How merciful to our fellow-creatures and to ourselves, who should infallibly feel the benefit of the practice of it, both in the delight inseparable from benevolent affections, and in the circulation of kind and friendly offices, which, degenerate as human nature is, few are so abandoned as not to endeavour to repay! Who would not imagine that the whole *world* should feel and obey the charm? And yet, instead of this, behold, they *hate Christ*, and his servants *for his sake*, though *without a cause*, and against the strongest engagements. Miserable creatures! who by a necessary consequence, whatever they may fondly imagine, *hate the Father also*, and stand daily and hourly exposed to all the dreadful terrors of an almighty enemy.

Let us not wonder *if the world hate us;* nor greatly regard it if it injure us. *We are not of the world*, nor *is the servant greater than his lord:* but surely the opposition which the gospel brings along with it, is nothing when compared with those blessings which it entails on all who faithfully embrace it. Were the sufferings and difficulties a thousand times greater than they are, we ought to esteem *the Pearl of price*, the most happy purchase at any rate, and to be be daily returning our most thankful acknowledgments that *Christ* sent forth *his apostles*. qualified with such a knowledge of himself, and assisted by such power from his Spirit, *appointing them to go and bring forth fruit*, even *fruit* which *should remain* to the remotest ages. Through his guardian care it still remains in the world: Oh may it flourish more abundantly among us! and may its efficacy on our hearts and lives be more apparent! And may Divine grace convince those who now reject and oppose it, that in the midst of such various evidence of his having *come and spoken to them, they have no cloak for their sin!* but with whatever fond excuses they may amuse themselves and others, it will quickly appear, that *the bed is too short to stretch themselves on it, and the covering too narrow to wrap themselves in.* (Isa. xxviii. 20.)

SECTION XCVII.

John xvi. 1—15.

These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.—But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you.

How great is the ignorance and folly of them that *persecute* their brethren *in the name of the Lord*, and *kill* his dear children under the *pretence of offering him* an acceptable *sacrifice!* Thus

were the *apostles* treated by those that *knew not* the God for whom they professed all this burning zeal. Let us bless God that we are providentially sheltered from those effects of it which might otherwise bear so hard upon us: and let us diligently watch over our hearts, that no irregular affections may work there, and no uncharitable sentiments be harboured. When, like the *apostles*, our *hearts* are *filled with sorrow*, let us be cautious that they may not be *stupified* by it, so that any call of duty should pass unheard or any opportunity of religious advancement unimproved; and let us not be indolent in our *inquiries* into the meaning of those dispensations which we do not understand; but seriously consider whether we are not *sorrowful* for that which is indeed designed for our *advantage*, and in the issue will be matter of *rejoicing* to us.

We hear to what purposes *the Comforter* was *sent*. His *coming* was designed in a peculiar manner for the *advantage* of the *apostles;* and was of greater service to them than the continuance of *Christ's* presence with them in the body would have been, not only to support and *comfort* them under all their *trials*, but to acquaint them with *all* necessary *truth*, and fully to instruct them in the mysteries of godliness. And he *came* also for the *conviction* of an *apostate* world; for the important errand he was sent upon was to awaken men's minds, and to *convince them* of their own guilt, and of *Christ's righteousness*, and of that awful *judgment* which should be executed on the most inveterate of his enemies. Let us often think of the force of the *Spirit's testimony* to the truth of *Christianity*, and endeavour to understand it in all its extent. Let us bless God that the gospel, and the character of his Son, were thus vindicated; and rejoice in the views of that complete conquest, to which *Satan* is already adjudged. In the mean time let us earnestly pray that the influences of the *Holy Spirit* may be communicated to us in such a manner that *Christ* may be *glorified* in us, and we in him; and that the *things of Christ* may be *taken, and shewn to us* by that *Spirit;* for it can only be done by means of *his* influence and operations.

SECTION XCVIII.

John xvi. 16—33.

A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said *some* of his disciples among them-

selves, what is that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.—And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give *it* you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me

alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

We are, perhaps, often regretting the *absence* of *Christ*, and looking back with emulation on the happier lot of those who conversed with him on earth in the days of his flesh: but if we are true *believers* in an *unseen Jesus*, it is but *a little while and we shall* also *see him;* for he *is gone to the Father*, and will so successfully negociate our affairs there, that whatever our present difficulties and sorrows are, they shall end more happily than those of a *woman*, who after all the pangs and throes of her *labour*, through the merciful interposition of Divine Providence, is made the *joyful mother of a living child.*

In the mean time, we have surely no reason to envy *the world* its *joys* and triumphs; alas, its season of *weeping* will quickly come? But *our lamentations* are soon to be *turned into songs of praise* and *our hearts* to be filled with that solid, sacred and peculiar *joy*, which, being the gift of *Christ*, can *never be taken away.*

While we are in this state of distance and darkness, let us rejoice that we have *access* to the *throne of grace* through the prevailing *name of Christ.* Let us come thither with holy courage and confidence, and *ask* that we may *receive;* and so our *joy may be full.* With what pleasure may we daily renew our visits *to that throne*, before which *Jesus* stands as an Intercessor; to *that throne*, which is possessed by *the Father*, who *himself loveth* us, and answers with readiness and delight those *petitions* which are thus recommended! May our *faith in Christ*, and our *love to him*, be still on the increasing hand; and our *supplications* will be more and more acceptable to him, whose *loving-kindness is better than life!* (Psalm lxiii. 3.)

Surely we shall be frequently reviewing these gracious *discourses* which *Christ* has bequeathed us as an invaluable legacy. May they dwell with us in all our solitude, and comfort us in every distress! We shall have no reason to wonder if human friendship be sometimes false, and always precarious: the *disciples of Christ* were *scattered* in the day of his extremity, and *left him alone*, when they were under the highest obligations to have adhered to him with the most inviolable fidelity. May we but be able like him to say, that our *Father is with us;* and that delightful converse with God, which we may enjoy in

our most solitary moments, will be a thousand times more than an equivalent for whatsoever we lose in the creatures. *In the world* we must indeed *have tribulation;* and he that has appointed it for us, knows that it is fit we should: but since *Jesus, the Captain of our salvation*, who was *made perfect through sufferings*, has *overcome the world*, and disarmed it; let us seek that *peace* which he has established, and press on with a *cheerful assurance*, that the least of his followers shall share in the honours and benefits of *his victory.*

SECTION XCIX.

John xvii. 1—12.

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the

world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*.

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

With pleasure let us behold our gracious *Redeemer* in this posture of humble adoration; *lifting up his eyes* to God with solemn devotion, and pouring out his pious and benevolent Spirit in those Divine breathings which are here recorded. From his example, let us learn to *pray*; and from his intercession, to *hope*. We know *that the Father heareth him always* (John xi. 42;) and singularly did he manifest that he heard him now, by all that bright assemblage of *glories* which shone around him in the concluding scenes of his abode on earth, and in those that attended his removal from it: and in all this too did the blessed *Jesus* manifest his zeal for the *glory of the Father*. May we emulate that holy temper! and when we *pray* even for *our own* consummate *happiness* in the heavenly world, may we consider it as ultimately centering in the honour and service of God!

Well may we be encouraged to hope for that *happiness*, since *Christ* has an universal *power over all flesh*, and over *spirits* superior to those that dwell in flesh; with which he is invested on purpose that he may accomplish the *salvation of those whom the Father has given him*, even of every true believer. We see the certain *way to this life*, even the *knowledge of God in Christ*: let us bless God, that we enjoy so many opportunities of obtaining it; and earnestly pray that *he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness*, would by his Divine rays *shine* forth on our benighted souls; and so animate us in his service, from the noblest principles of gratitude and love, that we may be able to say, even in our dying moments, with somewhat of the same Spirit which *our Lord* expressed, *Father*, we *have glorified thee on earth*, *and finished the work which thou gavest* us *to do*; and therefore, being *no more in the world*, we *come unto thee*. Then may we hope, in our humble degree, to partake of that *glory* to which he is returned, and to *sit down with him on his* victorious *throne*.

In the mean time may our *faith* see, and our *zeal* confess, *Christ!* May we *acknowledge* his *Divine authority*, as having *come out from the Father*; may we be *united* in love to him,

and to each other; and be *kept* by that *Divine word* which is the security of his people, that *none of them* shall be *lost!* Let *the son of perdition*, who perished even from among the *apostles*, teach us an humble jealousy over our own hearts, whatever external privileges we enjoy; and engage us to maintain a continual regard to *him who is able to keep* us *from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy!* (Jude ver. 24.)

SECTION C.

John xvii. 13—26.

And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: Thy word is truth.

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my

glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare *it*: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

We have indeed perpetual reason of thankfulness that our gracious Redeemer *spake these words in the world*, and recalled them thus exactly to the memory of his *beloved disciple* so many years after, that we in the most distant ages of his church might, by reviewing them, *have his joy fulfilled in us*. Let us with pleasure recollect that those *petitions* which *Christ* offered for his *apostles* were expressly declared *not* to be intended *for them alone;* but so far as circumstances should agree, *for all that should believe on him through their word*, and therefore *for us*, if we are real, and not merely nominal *believers*. For us doth he still *pray, not that God would* immediately *take us out of the world*, though for his sake we may be continually *hated* and injured in it; *but that* he would *keep us from the evil* to which we are here exposed. *For our sakes* did he also *sanctify himself* as a propitiation for our sins, *that we might also be sanctified through the truth;* for he *gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.* (Titus ii. 14.)

May these wise and gracious purposes of his love be fulfilled in us! *May* we *be one* with each other, and with him! May that piety and charity appear in the whole series of our temper and behaviour, which may evidently shew the force of our religion, and reflect a conspicuous honour upon the great Founder of it! And may all concur to train us up for that complete felicity above, in which all the purposes of his love centre! It is the declared *will* of *Christ*, and let us never forget it, *that* his people should *be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory which the Father has given him*. And there is apparent congruity, as well as mercy in the appointment: that *where he is, there also should his servants* and members *be*. The blessed *angels* do undoubtedly *behold the glory of Christ* with perpetual congratulation and delight; but how much more reason shall *we* have to rejoice and triumph in it when we consider it as *the glory* of one in our own nature, the *glory* of our Redeemer and our Friend, and the pledge and security of our own everlasting happiness! Let us often be lifting up the eyes of our faith towards it, and let us breathe after heaven in this view; in the mean time, with all due zeal, and love, and duty, *acknowledging the Father and the Son*, that the *joys of heaven* may be anticipated in our souls, while *the love of God*

is shed abroad there *by his Spirit, which is given unto us;* even something of that *love wherewith he has loved Jesus*, our incarnate Head.

SECTION CI.

MATT. XXVI. 30—35. MARK XIV. 26—31. LUKE XXII. 39. JOHN XVIII. 1.

WHEN Jesus had spoken these words, and they had sung a hymn, he went forth over the brook of Cedron, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after that I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee.

But Peter answered and said unto him, Though all *men* shall be offended because of thee, *yet* will I never be offended. Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this day, *even* in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said all the disciples.

So feeble is the heart of man, and yet so ready to trust to its own strength! So gracious is the *Lord Jesus Christ*, that great *Shepherd and Bishop of souls*, who gave himself to be *smitten for his flock* when they had forsaken him; and then returning, sought them out again, and fed them in richer pastures than before!

How reasonable is it that our hearts should be fixed in the most inflexible resolution for his service! How fit that we should every one of us say, with the utmost determination of soul, *Lord, though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee!* For how could death wear a more graceful, or a more pleasing form, than when it met us close by *our Saviour's* side, and came as the seal of our fidelity to him?

Surely this is the language of many of our hearts before him, especially when warmed and animated by a sense of his dying

love to us. Yet *let us not be high-minded;* for *Peter*, after this declaration, *denied his Master;* and *the same night* in which they had protested they would never leave him, *all the disciples forsook him and fled.* (Matt. xxvi. 56.) Nor, on the other hand, let the view of that frailty discourage, though it ought to caution us; for the time came when each of them behaved as they here spoke; and they who in his very presence acted so weak a part, through the influences of his strengthening Spirit, *resisted unto blood*, and *loved not their lives unto the death, for the testimony of Jesus.* (Rev. xii. 11.)

SECTION CII.

MATT. XXVI. 36—46. MARK XIV. 32—42. LUKE XXII. 40—46. JOHN XVIII. 1.

THEN cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter, and James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, and he began to be sorrowful, sore amazed, and very heavy. Then saith Jesus unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, fell on his face on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, O my Father, if it be possible, (and all things are possible unto thee,) take away this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? what, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak. And he went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And when he returned,

he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly: (with strong crying and tears, Heb. v. 7,) and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come the third time to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye now, and take your rest? it is enough; rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. Behold, the hour is come, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

On the most transient survey of this amazing story we cannot but fall into deep admiration. What *a sight* is here! Let our souls *turn aside* to behold it with a becoming temper: and surely we must wonder how the *disciples* could *sleep* in the midst of a scene which might almost have awakened rocks and trees to compassion.

Behold *the Prince of life*, God's incarnate and only-begotten Son, *drinking of the brook in the way*, (Psalm cx. 7;) and not only tasting, but drawing in full draughts of that bitter *cup* which his *heavenly Father* put into his hands on this awful occasion. Let us behold him *kneeling*, and even *prostrate on the ground*, and there pouring out his *strong cries and tears to him that was able to save him from death.* (Heb. v. 7.) Let us view him in this *bloody agony*, and say, *If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* (Luke xxiii. 31.) If even Christ himself was so depressed with *sorrow* and *amazement*, and the distress and anguish he endured were such, that in his *agony* the *sweat* ran from him *like great drops of blood*, when *our iniquities were laid upon him*, and *it pleased the Father to bruise him, and to put him to grief*, (Isa. liii. 6, 10;) how must the sinner then be filled with horror, and with what dreadful *agonies* of anguish and despair will he be overwhelmed, when he shall bear the burden of *his own iniquities*, and God shall *pour out all his wrath* upon him? Behold, how *fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!* (Heb. x. 31.)

Here was no human enemy near our blessed *Redeemer;* yet such invisible *terrors set themselves in array against* him, that

his very *soul* was *poured out like water;* nor was there any circumstance of his sufferings in which he discovered a greater commotion of spirit. Nevertheless, his pure and holy soul bare all this without any irregular perturbation. *In all this* he *sinned not* by a murmuring word, or an impatient thought: he shone the brighter for the *furnace of affliction*, and gave us at once the most wonderful and the most amiable pattern of *resignation* to the divine disposal, when he said, *Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt* —May this be our language under every trial! *Lord*, we could wish it was; and we would maintain a holy watchfulness over our own souls, that it may be so! But in this respect, as well as in every other, we find that even when *the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.* How happy is it for us that the blessed *Jesus knows our frame*, and has *learnt*, by what *he himself suffered* in our frail nature, to make the most compassionate allowance for its various infirmities! Let us learn to imitate this his gentle and gracious conduct, even *in an hour* of so much *distress.* Let us bear with and let us pity each other, not aggravating every neglect of our friends into a crime; but rather speaking of their faults in the mildest terms, and making the most candid excuses for what we cannot defend. Let us exercise such a temper, even in the most gloomy and dejected moments of life; which surely may well be expected of us, who ourselves need so much compassion and indulgence almost from every one with whom we converse; and, which is infinitely more, who owe our *all* to the forbearance of that God, *of whose mercy it is that we are not* utterly *consumed.*

SECTION CIII.

MATTHEW XXVI. 47—56. MARK XIV. 43—52. LUKE XXII. 47—53. JOHN XVIII. 2—11.

AND Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with his disciples.

And immediately, while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, having received a band *of men* and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees. Scribes and elders of the people, with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus

of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am *he*. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am *he*, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am *he;* if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. Now he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, hold him fast, and lead *him* away safely. *And he* went before them. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail Master, Master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword: And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus, Simon Peter, having a sword, stretched out his hand, drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servants name was Malchus.

And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up again thy sword into the sheath: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

In that same hour said Jesus unto the chief priests and captains of the temple, and the elders, and to the multitudes which were come to him, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and *with* staves, to take me? When I was daily with you in the temple, teaching, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is

your hour, and the power of darkness. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about *his* naked *body;* and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

The heroic behaviour of the blessed *Jesus*, in the whole period of his *sufferings*, will easily make itself observed by every attentive eye, though the *sacred historians*, according to their usual but wonderful simplicity, make no encomiums upon it. With what composure does he go forth to meet the traitor! with what calmness does he receive that malignant *kiss!* With what dignity does he deliver himself into the hands of his *enemies*, yet plainly shewing his superiority over them, and *leading* as it were even then *captivity captive!*

We see him generously capitulating for the *safety* of *his friends*, while he neglected *his own;* and afterward, not only *forbidding* all the *defence* they attempted to make, but *curing* that *wound* which one of his enemies had received in this assault on him. With what meek majesty did he say, *Suffer ye* at least *thus far! And he touched his ear, and healed him.* We hear his words, we behold his actions with astonishment: but surely our indignation must rise within us when we see so amiable and excellent a Person thus injured and abused; when we see *the Son of man betrayed with a kiss: betrayed* by his intimate friend, who had *eaten of his bread*, and yet *lifted up his heel against him*, (John xiii, 18,) and at the same time *forsaken by all his disciples*, even by him whom he most tenderly *loved*, and who had so often *leant on his bosom.* Let us not wonder if some of our *friends* prove false; and others seem to forget us when we have the greatest need of their assistance. When we deserve so much less *friendship* than *Christ* did, let us not think it strange if we find but little more. Nor can we reasonably be so much amazed, as we might otherwise have been, to see sinners going on under the most awful *rebukes* of providence; when we consider that these wretches, who had been *struck down to the ground* by one *word* of *Christ's* mouth, should immediately *rise up* and stretch forth their impious hands against him, to *seize and bind him;* though they might well have known that they lived only by his indulgence and forbearance, and that the same *word* that *struck them down to the ground*, could have laid them *dead* there. *Touch our hearts, O*

Lord, by thy *grace ;* or it will be in vain that we are *smitten* with thy *rod !*

In all the remainder of this story let us remember that *Jesus* voluntarily *gave himself up* to *sufferings* which he circumstantially foreknew ; even though he could have commanded to his assistance whole *legions of angels. His Father's will* was an answer to all that nature could plead in its own cause ; and the good hand from which *this cup* of his severest sufferings came, reconciled him to all the bitterest ingredients it contained. How reasonable then is it that we who, having *had fathers of our flesh that corrected us*, submitted to the rod, and *gave them reverence*, should *much rather*, after the example of our innocent and holy Redeemer, *be in subjection to the Father of* our *spirits*, *and live!* (Heb. xii. 9.)

SECTION CIV.

MATT. XXVI. 57—68. MARK XIV. 53—65. LUKE XXII. 54, 55, 63—65. JOHN XVIII. 19—24.

THEN the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas first ; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high-priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. And Annas sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high-priest : and with him were assembled all the chief priests, and the elders, and the Scribes.

And Simon Peter followed Jesus afar off unto the high-priest's palace, and *so did* another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high-priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high-priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high-priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. And the servants and officers had made a fire of coals in the midst of the hall, (for it was cold :) and were set down together ; and they warmed themselves :

and Peter sat down among them to see the end; and warmed himself at the fire.

The high-priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world: I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high-priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high-priest.

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; but found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, *and* bear false witness against him, yet found they none: *for* their witness agreed not together. At the last came two false witnesses, and said, We heard this fellow say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together. And the high-priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what *is it which* these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high-priest asked him, and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ the Son of God the blessed? Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said. And Jesus said, I am: Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high-priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? And they all answered, and condemned him, and said, He is guilty of death. Then

did they spit in his face, and buffetted him; and the men that held Jesus mocked him, covered his face, and when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

Thus was the patient *Lamb of God* surrounded by his bloodthirsty enemies: Thus did *the dogs encompass him*, and the *strong bulls of Bashan beset him on every side.* (Psalm xxii. 12, 16.) Thus was he *brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.* (Isaiah liii. 7, 8.) *He was taken from judgment*, and suffered the worst kind of murder, even that which had the appearance of being legal. But those *gentle words* which he dropped in the midst of all the injuries which were offered him are surely worthy ever to be recorded and remembered. It had always been his care to *provide things honest in the sight of all men:* and as he answered with a most graceful and courageous appeal to all that heard him, as to the innocence and usefulness of his doctrine, so it is well worthy our observation and reflection, that God so far restrained the rage and malice of hell, that no such *false witnesses* arose against him, as could on the whole asperse his character, or bring it under any brand of public infamy; though *Judas*, as well as others, might have sought a reward, or at least an indemnity, for their own villainy, in accusing him. And indeed it is no inconsiderable instance of God's providential government of the world, that wicked men are restrained by this one remainder of reverence for the Divine omniscience, and dread of his vengeance, from destroying the reputations and lives of his children; especially in countries where (as in our own) the *punishment* which human laws inflict on *perjury* is so much below its desert.

When *Jesus* was examined *on oath he witnessed a good confession*, and cited those that were now his *judges* to appear at *his bar.* Nor was it a vain boast! *The Son of man* is now *sitting at the right hand of power*, and will ere long *come in the clouds of heaven;* and then *they* that *condemned*, and *insulted*, and *pierced him*, *shall mourn because of him*, (Rev. i. 7.) May we be now so *wise* as *to kiss the Son* in token of our humble allegiance to him, *lest he be* then justly *angry* with us; yea, lest, *we* immediately *perish from the way*, *when his wrath is but beginning to be kindled!* (Psalm ii. 12.)

SECTION CV.

MATT. XXVI. 69—75. MARK. XIV. 66—72. LUKE XXII. 56—62. JOHN XVIII. 17, 18, 25—27.

Now Peter sat without in the palace: and as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high-priest, the damsel that kept the door. And when she saw Peter as he sat by the fire, warming himself, she earnestly looked upon him, and said, Art thou not also *one* of this man's disciples? Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before *them* all, saying, Woman, I am not, I know him not, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And when he was gone out into the porch, *this* maid saw him again, and another, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold; and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art thou not also *one* of his disciples? And again he denied with an oath, I am not, I do not know the man. And after a while, about the space of one hour after, one of the servants of the high-priest, being *his* kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this *fellow* was also with him; for he is a Galilean. And he said to Peter, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? And they that stood by said unto Peter, Surely thou art *one* of them, for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech bewrayeth thee. Peter then denied again, and began to curse and to swear, and said, Man, I know not what thou sayest; I know not this man of whom ye speak. And immediately, while he yet spake, the second time the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto

him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he went out, and wept bitterly.

How loudly does this affecting story speak to us in the words of the apostle, *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*, (1 Cor. x. 12.) *Peter* professed the warmest zeal; and gave his *Lord* repeated and no doubt, very sincere assurances of the firmest resolution in his cause! and yet, except *Judas* the traitor, none of his *brethren* fell so low as he. But a few hours before he had been with *Christ* at the sacred *table*, and heard from his own lips those gracious *discourses* which, as echoed back from his word, do still strike so strongly on the heart of every true believer. He had just seen those words remarkably, and even miraculously, verified, that *Jesus having loved his own that were in the world, loved them to the end*, (John xiii. 1.) How reasonably then might it have been expected that *his own* should also have continued their most zealous and constant affection to him! But *Peter*, who, if possible, was more than doubly *his* as a *disciple*, as an *apostle*, as a distinguished *intimate*, most shamefully *denies him;* and that not only *once*, but a *second*, yea, and a *third* time, even with *oaths* and *curses*, as if he would by that diabolical language give a sensible proof that he did not belong to *Christ:* and who indeed, that had heard it, would have imagined that he did? Nay, to aggravate it yet farther, it was done in the presence of the *other disciple*, and even of *Christ* himself, who surely was much more painfully wounded by this perfidiousness of *Peter* than by all the rage and fury of his enemies. *Lord, what is man?* What is our boasted strength but weakness! and, if we are left unto ourselves, how do our most solemn resolutions melt like snow before the sun! *Be thou surety for thy servants, for good.* (Psalm cxix. 122.)

The Lord turned and looked upon Peter. So may he graciously *look upon us* if we at any time make any approach towards the like sin! May he *look upon us* with a glance which shall penetrate our hearts, and cause *floods* of penitential *sorrow* to flow forth! *Peter went out, and wept bitterly.* He quitted that dangerous scene where temptation had met and vanquished him; and chose retirement and solitude to give vent to his overflowing soul. Thus may we recover ourselves; or rather, thus may we be recovered by Divine grace from those slips and falls which in this frail state we shall often be making! Let us *retire* from the business and the snares of life; that we may attend to the voice of conscience, and of God speaking by it; and may so taste *the wormwood and gall*, that our souls may

long have them in *remembrance.* To conclude; let us express the sincerity of our *godly sorrow* by a more cautious and resolute guard against the occasions of sin, if we would not be found to trifle with God when we pray *that he would not lead us into temptation, but would deliver us from evil.*

SECTION CVI.

MATT. XXVII. 1—10. MARK XV. LUKE XXII. 66—71, XXIII. 1. JOHN XVIII. 28.

AND as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests and the Scribes came together, led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask *you*, ye will not answer me, nor let *me* go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

MATT. XXVII. 1, 2. MARK XV. 1. LUKE XXIII. 1. JOHN XVIII. 28.

And straightway in the morning all the chief Priests held a consolation with the elders and Scribes and the whole council, against Jesus to put him to death: And the whole multitude of them arose, and when they had bound Jesus, they led *him* away from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor: and it was early.

MATT. XXVII. 3—10.

Then Judas which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and

elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayd thee innocent blood. And they said, What *is that* to us? see thou *to that*. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself; (and falling headlong, he burst assunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. Acts i. 18.)

And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and brought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

In how fatal a manner does the *way of transgresors* deceive them! *Judas*, no doubt, but a few hours before, was thinking with eager impatience of receiving this sum of *money*, which was the *wages of unrighteousness:* but though he might for a little while *roll it* as a sweet morsel *under his tongue*, yet how soon was it *turned* into *the gall of asps within him?* (Job xx. 12—14.)

We see the *force* of *conscience*, even in the worst of men. He that had slighted all the warnings that his Master gave him, and neither was affected by the remembrance of his goodness to him, nor by the fear of his displeasure, while he was set upon accomplishing his covetous design, no sooner comes to feel the sting of an awakened *conscience*, but he is filled with horror, and is unable to endure the cutting anguish of his own reflections. And thus could God, in a moment, drive the most hardened sinner into all the agonies of remorse and despair, by letting loose *his own thoughts* upon him, to prey upon his heart like so many hungry *vultures*, and make him a *terror* to others, and an *executioner* to himself.

We must surely admire the wisdom of Providence, in extorting even from the mouth of this *traitor* so honourable a *testimony* of the *innocence* of *Jesus*, though to his own condemnation. And who could have imagined that the *supreme court of Israel* itself should have been so little impressed with it, as coldly to answer, *What is that to us? See thou to that.* Is this the language of *rulers*, yea, of *priests?* But they had cast off the *fear* of that *God* whose ministers they were, and had devoted themselves to *gain* and *ambition*. They therefore felt no remorse, even when *Judas*

trembled before them, and appeared almost distracted under the sense of a crime, in which they had been confederates with him. But their *consciences* were *seared as with a red hot iron*, and all their familiar converse with Divine things served only, in such a circumstance, to harden their hearts: as tempered *steel gathers* strength from the furnace and the hammer.

Judas repents; he *confesses* his crime; he *throws away* the reward of his guilt: yet was there nothing of *godly sorrow* in all this. Despairing, he becomes *his own executioner;* and flies to *death*, and to *hell*, as a refuge from the rage and fury of an awakened conscience. Fatal expedient! thus to seal his own damnation! But the righteous judgment of God erected him as a monument of wrath, and verified *our Saviour's* declaration, *It had been good for that man if he had never been born.* (Mat. xxvi. 24, and Mark xiv. 21.) Tremble, O our souls, at this thought! that *Judas*, even *one of the twelve*, should fall into such depths of sin and ruin! May we each of us be jealous over ourselves! and may we never presume to censure whole bodies of men for the fault of particular members, when we find there was a *traitor* and *reprobate* among the holy band of the *apostles*.

SECTION CVII.

John xviii. 28—40.

And they themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled: but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die. Then Pilate entered into the judgment-hall again, and called Jesus; And Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee

of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

How much exactness in the ceremonials of religion may be found in those who have even the most outrageous contempt for its vital principles and essential duties! Yea, how much of that exactness may be made subservient to the most mischievous and diabolical purposes! These *wolves in sheep's clothing* would not *enter into the house* of a heathen, *lest they should be polluted*, and become unfit to *eat the passover;* yet they contrive and urge an impious murder, which that very *heathen*, though he had much less evidence of *Christ's* innocence than they, could not be brought to permit without strong reluctance, and a solemn, though vain transferring of the guilt from himself to them.

Justly might *our Lord* say in the words of *David*, *They laid to my charge things that I knew not;* (Psal. xxxv. 11.) But what can defend the most innocent and excellent against malicious slanders and defamations! Or who can expect, or even wish, wholly to escape, when such *accusations* are brought against *Christ*, even by the *rulers* of his nation, who should have been men of distinguished generosity and honour! But instead of this they were all *an assembly of murderers*, and *lay in wait for their prey*, like so many devouring *lions*.

Pilate would renew the *examination* of the cause; and so far he acted a cautious and an honourable part. Yet, alas, how many that set out on such maxims want courage and resolution to pursue them! But the courage of *Christ* never failed. He *witnessed*

before Pontius Pilate the *good confession* we have now been reading (1 Tim. vi. 13;) and owned himself *a King*, though at the same time he declared (what it were to be wished all his followers had duly regarded) that *his kingdom is not of this world.* Greatly do we debase it, if we imagine it is; and most unworthy is it of those that call themselves *the ministers of his kingdom* to act as if they thought it was. Yet such is the wickedness of some, and such the blindness of others, in the *Roman church*, that, though of all the churches in the world it is manifestly the most *secular kingdom*, it arrogates to itself the name not only of a part, but of the whole, of *Christ's kingdom* here below.

Christ came to bear witness to the truth; and a careful attendance to his testimony will be the best proof we can give that we love *the truth*, and the best method we can take to make ourselves acquainted with it. And of so great importance is *the truth*, that it surely deserves the attentive inquiry and the zealous patronage of the greatest and the busiest of mankind. Let us not therefore, when we begin to ask *what it is* like *Pilate*, hurry on to some other care before we can receive a satisfactory answer; but joyfully open our minds to the first dawnings of that celestial day, till it shine more and more to irradiate and adorn all our souls. On the whole, imperfect as the character of this unhappy governor was, let us learn from him candidly to confess *the truth*, so far as we have discovered it, let us learn more steadily than he to vindicate the innocent and worthy, and on no terms permit ourselves, in any degree, to do harm to those in whom, on a strict and impartial inquiry, we can *find no fault.*

SECTION CVIII.

John xix. 1—14.

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged *him;* and the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put *it* on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.

Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing

the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And *Pilate* saith unto them, Behold the man! When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify *him*. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify *him*; for I find no fault in him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment-hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus, gave him no answer. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered. Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour.

Let us now, by a lively act of faith, bring forth the blessed *Jesus* to our imagination, as *Pilate brought him forth* to the people. Let us with affectionate sympathy survey the indignities, which were offered him, when he *gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; and hid not his face from shame and spitting.* (Isaiah i. 6.) *Behold the man*, wearing his *purple robe* and *thorny crown*, and bearing *the reed* which smote him *in his right hand* for a sceptre! *Behold*, not merely *the man*, but *the Son of God*, thus vilely degraded, thus infamously abused! Shall *we*, as it were, increase his sufferings, and, while we condemn the fury and cruelty of the *Jews*, shall we *crucify him to ourselves afresh, and put him to an open shame?* (Heb. vi. 6.) Or shall we overlook him

with slight and contempt, and *hide our faces from him*, who for our sake thus exposed his own? (Isa. liii. 3.)

Let the caution even of this *heathen judge*, who *feared*, when he *heard* he so much as pretended to be *the Son of God*, engage us to reverence him, especially considering in how *powerful* a manner he has since been *declared to be so*. (Rom. i. 4.) Let us in this sense *have nothing to do with* the blood of *this Just Person*. Let *his example* teach us patiently to submit to those sufferings which God shall appoint for us, remembering that no enemies, and no calamities we meet with, could *have any power against us, except it were given* them *from above*.

SECTION CIX.

MATT. XXVII. 11—14. MARK XV. 2—5. LUKE XXIII. 2—16. JOHN XIX. 15.

AND they began to accuse him, saying, We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, that he himself is Christ a King. And Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus answering said unto him, Thou sayest *it*.

And the chief priests and elders accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered him to never a word; insomuch that Pilate the governor marvelled greatly.

Then said Pilate to the chief priests and *to* the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirred up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long *season*,

because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. And the chief priests and Scribes stood and vehemently accused him. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked *him*, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves. And he saith unto the Jews, Behold your king! But they cried out, away with *him*, away with *him*, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar.

And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined *him* before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him: no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. I will therefore chastise him, and release *him*.

Behold, how all imaginable circumstances seem to conspire to increase the *infamy* thrown on that *sacred head*, which now most worthily wears a crown of eternal glory! *Of a truth*, O Lord, *against thy holy Child Jesus*, *both Herod and Pontius Pilate*, *with the Gentiles* and the chief priests, *and all the people of Israel*, *were gathered together*, *to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel had determined before to be done.* (Acts iv. 27, 28.) The wisest person on earth was by *Herod and his soldiers derided* as a fool: the most deserving was *condemned* by the *chief priests*; and the most innocent was treated as a criminal by *Pilate*, and furiously demanded as a public victim by the *Jews*. All the proofs of his innocence are overborne by a *loud* and senseless *cry*: and those *hosannahs* with which the streets and temple were so lately echoing, are exchanged into *Crucify him*, *crucify him*. So uncertain is human applause, and so unrighteous may human judgments be.

But in the midst of all, the blessed *Jesus* stands collectedin himself. Firm as a rock he bears the violence of the storm,

and is not moved by all the furious waves that beat upon him; and when he saw *a robber* and *a murderer* preferred before him, and *a sentence* of the most cruel *death* clamorously called for and demanded against him, he silently *commits himself to him that judgeth righteously*, who ere long *brought forth* his *righteousness as brightness*, *and* his *salvation as a lamp that burneth.* (Compare 1 Peter ii. 23, and Isaiah lxii. 1.)

Lord, if thou callest us out to share in thy sufferings, may *the Spirit of God and of glory* thus *rest on us!* And may neither the scorn nor the rage of our enemies separate us from thee, who did so courageously bear all this for us; nor may they ever sink us into any weakness of behaviour unworthy of those who have the honor to call themselves *thy followers!*

SECTION CX.

MATT. XXVII. 15—26. MARK XV. 6—15. LUKE XXIII. 17—25. JOHN XIX. 16.

Now at *that* feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner called Barabbas, *which lay* bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire *him to do* as he had ever done unto them, (for of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas or Jesus which is called Christ? will ye that I release unto you the king of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.

When he was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release

unto you? And they cried out all at once, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas. Pilate therefore willing to release Jesus, answered and said again to them, saying, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? *him* whom ye call the king of the Jews? And they all cried out again, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. And Pilate said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. And they cried out the more exceedingly, they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye *to it*. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children. And *so* Pilate willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; and took Jesus and scourged him. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required, and he delivered Jesus to their will to be crucified.

How wisely was it ordered by Divine Providence that *Pilate* should be obliged thus to *acquit Christ*, even while he *condemned him:* and to speak of him as a *righteous person*, in the same breath with which he doomed him to the *death* of the most flagitious *malefactor!* And how lamentably does the power of *worldly interest* over *conscience* appear, when, after all the convictions of his own mind, as well as the admonitions of *his wife*, he yet *gave him up* to popular fury. O *Pilate*, how gloriously hadst thou fallen in the defence of the *Son of God!* and how justly did God afterward leave thee to perish by the resentment of that people whom thou wast now so studious to oblige.

Who can without trembling read that dreadful imprecation, *May his blood be on us, and on our children!* Words, which even to this day, have their remarkable and terrible accomplishment in that *curse*, which has pursued the *Jews* through *seventeen hundred* years. *Lord*, may it at length be averted,

and even turned into *a blessing!* May they *look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn*, till all the obstinacy of their hearts be subdued: till they bow down in glad submission to that *King* whom God has *set on his holy hill*, and thus are brought themselves to *reign with him* in everlasting honour and joy!

SECTION CXI.

MATT. XXVII. 27—34. MARK XV. 16—23. LUKE XXIII. 26—34. JOHN XIX. 16—18.

THEN the soldiers of the governor took Jesus, and led him away into the common hall, called Pretorium: and gathered unto him the whole band *of soldiers*. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put *it* upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! and they spit upon him, and smote him with their hands, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.

And the soldiers, after they had mocked him, took off the purple from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him out to crucify him. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called *the place* of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha. And as they led him away, they laid hold upon a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus; on him they laid the cross, and compelled him to bear *it* after Jesus.

And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold the days are coming, in the

which they shall say, Blessed *are* the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

And there were also two other malefactors led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of the skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh; but he received *it* not: and when he had tasted *thereof*, he would not drink. There they crucified him, and the two malefactors with him; one on the right hand, and the other on the left, and Jesus in the midst.

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

Here let us pause awhile, and make a few serious reflections on this amazing story, which the *evangelists* relate with so much simplicity. Behold *the Son of God bearing his cross*, fainting under the load of it, and at length extended upon it, and *nailed* to it. *Him they took, and with wicked hands crucified and slew him.* (Acts ii. 23.) Blessed *Jesus*, was it *for this* that thou didst honour our nature by a union to thine own, and come from thy throne of glory to visit these abodes of misery and guilt! Was it *for this* that so many gracious discourses were delivered, and so many works of love and power performed! *for this*, that thou mightest be treated as the *worst of criminals*, and suspended on *a cross* in the air, as if unworthy of a place on earth even to die upon! Amazing and lamentable sight! Justly, *O sun*, mightest thou blush to see it: justly, *O earth*, mightest thou tremble to support it!

Lord, like these pious *women*, who had the zeal and fortitude to *attend thee*, when thine own *apostles forsook thee and fled*, we would *follow thee weeping*; yet *not for thee, but for ourselves*: that our guilt had brought us under a *condemnation*, from which we could be *redeemed* by nothing less than the *precious blood of the Son of God*: that *Lamb without blemish and without spot.* (1 Peter i. 19.) We should *behold* herein *the goodness and the severity of God*, (Rom. xi. 22,) for while the *riches of his goodness* are displayed in his *providing a ransom* for the redemption of lost sinners, an awful proof is given of the *severity of his*

justice, in his *not sparing his own Son*, nor exempting him from the sorrows and sufferings due to sin, when he came to put himself in the stead of sinners: and may we not in such a view *tremble for fear of him, and be afraid of his judgments?* (Psalm cxix. 120.) Who can support the weight of his *indignation*, especially when it shall come aggravated by the abuse of so much *love? If these things be done in the green wood, what shall be done in the dry?* And if such sufferings be inflicted, where there was not any *personal guilt* to kindle the flame, on one who only answered for the sins of others; what then will be the end of those who, *by their own iniquities*, are become as *fuel* prepared for the fire, and are as *vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?*

How shocking is it to behold the vile *indignities* that were put upon a suffering *Jesus*, and to reflect upon the cruel treatment that he met with from his insulting enemies! Yet have not *we* been *verily guilty* concerning this matter? (Gen. xlii. 21.) Are we not chargeable with *despising Christ?* and have we *not crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame?* (Heb. vi. 6.) O may that *apology* be heard in our favour! *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!* For surely sinners *do not know what they do*, when they *pierce Christ* by their sins, and *turn away their faces from him.*—But under all his sufferings, how amazing was his *meekness!* and how compassionate the *concern* which he expressed for his most cruel persecutors? May we learn *patience*, and *love to our enemies*, from so bright an example of it! May we, like him, *bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us!* (Matt. v. 44.) Instead of being ingenious to aggravate their faults, and to paint them in the most shocking colours, let us rather seek for the best *excuses*, which even the worst of causes will fairly bear; influenced by that *charity* which unconstrained *believes no evil, and hopeth all things* even against hope. (1 Cor. xiii. 5, 7.)

Gracious *Saviour!* thy dying *prayer*, and thy dying *blood*, were not *like water spilt upon the ground;* they *came up in remembrance before God*, when thy *gospel* began to be *preached at Jerusalem:* and *multitudes*, who were now *consenting to thy death, gladly received thy word, and were baptized*, (Acts ii. 41,) and they are now in *glory*, celebrating that *grace* which has taken out the *scarlet* and *crimson dye* of their sins, and turned that *blood* which they so impiously shed into the balm of their wounds, and the life of their souls.

SECTION CXII.

JOHN XIX. 19—22.

AND Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross; and the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews; for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, *and* Greek, *and* Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am the King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

MATT. XXVII. 35—38. MARK XV. 24—28. JOHN XIX. 23, 24.

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a a part; and also *his* coat; now the coat was without a seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be. And they cast lots: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did; and sitting down they watched him there. And it was the third hour and they crucified him. And *they* set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with him they crucified two thieves; the one on his right hand and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

MATT. XXVII. 39—44. MARK XV. 29—32. LUKE XXIII. 35.

And they that passed by reviled him, and railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that des-

troyeth the temple, and buildest *it* in three days, save thyself, if thou be the Son of God, and come down from the cross. And the people stood beholding. Likewise also the chief priests mocking *him* said among themselves with the Scribes and elders, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be Christ, the King of Israel, the chosen of God, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God: let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth, and reviled him. And the soldiers also mocked him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself.

How great and glorious does the *Lord Jesus Christ* appear in the midst of all those dishonours which his enemies were now heaping upon him! While these rapacious *soldiers* were dividing the spoils, *parting his raiment among them, and casting lots for his vesture*, God was working in all to crown him with *a glory* which none could take from him, and to make the lustre of it so much the more conspicuous by that *dark cloud* which now surrounded him.

His enemies *upbraided him* as an *abandoned miscreant*, deserted both by God and man; but he (though able to have *come down from the cross* in a moment, or by one word from thence to have *struck* these insolent wretches *dead* on the place, and to have sent their guilty spirits to accompany the *fiends* under whose influence they were,) yet patiently endured all, and was *as a deaf man*, who *heard not* their reproaches, *and as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.* (Psa. xxxviii. 13.)

Luke xxiii. 38—43.

And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemna-

tion? and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

But as soon as the *penitent thief* addressed him with that humble supplication, the language of repentance, faith, and hope, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*, he immediately *hears* and *answers* him: and in how gracious and remarkable a phrase! *This day shalt thou be with me in paradise!* What a triumph was here, not only of *mercy* to the dying *penitent*, but of the strongest faith in God, that when to an eye of sense he seemed to be most *deserted* and *forgotten* by him, and was on every side beset with the *scorn* of *them that were at ease*, and with the *contempt* of *the proud*, he should speak from the *cross* as from a *throne*, and undertake from thence, not only to dispense *pardons*, but to dispose of *seats in paradise!*

Most ungrateful and most foolish is the conduct of those who take encouragement from hence to *put off their repentance* perhaps to a dying moment: *most ungrateful* in perverting the *grace* of the *Redeemer* into an occasion of renewing their provocations against him, and hardening their hearts in their impieties, and *most foolish* to imagine that what *Our Lord* did in so singular a circumstance is to be drawn into an ordinary precedent. *This criminal* had, perhaps, never heard of the gospel before; and now how cordially does he embrace it? Probably there are few *saints in glory* who ever honoured *Christ* more illustriously than this dying sinner, acknowledging him to be *the Lord of life*, whom he saw in the agonies of *death;* and pleading his cause when his *friends* and *brethren forsook him*, and *stood afar off.* (Compare Matt. xxvi. 56, and Luke xxiii. 49.)

But such is the corruption of men's hearts, and such the artifice of *Satan*, that all other views of him are overlooked, and nothing remembered, but that he was a notorious offender, who *obtained mercy* in his departing moments. The Lord grant that none who read this story here may be added to the list of those who, *despising the forbearance and long-suffering of God*, and *not knowing that his goodness leads to repentance*, have been emboldened to abuse *this scripture*, so as to perish, either without crying for mercy at all, or crying for it in vain, after having *treasured up* an inexhaustible store of *wrath*, misery, and despair! (Rom. ii. 4, 5.)

SECTION CXIII.

MATT. XXVII. 45—54. MARK XLIV. 33—39. LUKE XXIII. 44—48. JOHN XIX. 25—27.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary *the wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home*.

And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? which is being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard *that*, said, Behold, this *man* calleth for Elias?

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished.

And when Jesus had cried again with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

MATT. XXVII. 51—56. MARK XV. 38—41. LUKE XXIII. 47—49.

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, in the midst, from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Now when the centurion which stood over against him, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, that he so cried out and gave up the ghost, they feared greatly: and the centurion glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man; Truly this man was the Son of God. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned.

And surely we, when we *return* from such a view of it as this, have reason to *smite upon our breasts* too, and to be most deeply affected with what we have *heard and seen* in this lively description. Let us set ourselves as with the *mother of Jesus*, and the *beloved disciple*, at the foot of the *cross*: and *see* whether *there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger.* (Lam. i 12.) Well might *the sun* grow pale at the sight; well might *the earth* tremble to support it! How obdurate must the hearts of those sinners be, who could *make a mock* of all his anguish, and sport themselves with his dying groans! But surely the blessed *angels* who were now, though in an invisible crowd, surrounding the accursed tree, beheld him with other sentiments: admiring and adoring the various *virtues* which he expressed in every circumstance of his behaviour; and which, while the *sun of righteousness* was setting, gilded and adorned all the horizon. Let us likewise pay our homage to them, and observe with admiration his *tenderness* to his surviving *parent*; his *meekness* under all these injuries and provocations; his steady *faith in God* in an hour of the utmost distress; and his *concern* to accomplish all the purposes of his life, before he yielded to the stroke of death.

Yet with what amazement must the holy *angels* hear *that cry from the Son of God*, from the darling of heaven, *My God, my*

God, why hast thou forsaken me! Let not any of the *children of God* wonder if their *heavenly Father* sometimes withdraw from them the sensible and supporting manifestations of his presence, when *Christ* himself was thus exercised; and let them remember that *faith* never appears with greater glory than when, in language like this, it bursts through a thick cloud, and owns *the God of Israel*, and *the Saviour*, even while *he is a God that hideth himself* from us. (Is. xlv. 15.) May we, in our approaching combat with the *king of terrors*, find him enervated by the *death* of our dear *Lord*, who thus conquered even when he fell! May we thus *breathe out* our willing and composed *spirits into our Father's hands*, with a language and faith like this, as *knowing whom we have believed, and being persuaded that he is able to keep what we commit to him until that day!* (2 Tim. i. 12.)

SECTION CXIV.

MATT. XXVII. 55—61. MARK XV. 40—47. LUKE XXIII. 49—56. JOHN XIX. 31—41.

AND all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee ministering unto him, stood afar off; among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome the mother of Zebedee's children: and many other women were there, which came up with him unto Jerusalem, beholding these things.

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath-day, (for the sabbath-day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.

And he that saw *it* bear record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

And after this, when the even was come, behold, there came a rich man of Arimathæa, a city of the Jews, named Joseph, an honourable counsellor, *and he was* a good and a just man. The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them: *but* also himself waited for the kingdom of God, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews. This man went in boldly unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus, that he might take it away. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling *unto him* the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew *it* of the centurion, he gave *him* leave, and commanded the body to be delivered to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took him down.

And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound *weight*. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, which he [*Joseph*] had hewn out in the rock, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jews' preparation-*day*, and the sabbath drew on: for the sepulchre was nigh at hand; and he rolled a great stone at the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre: and there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary the mother of Joses, sitting over against the sepulchre, and beheld how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments: and rested the sabbath-day, according to the commandment.

We have seen the sorrows of our expiring *Lord:* let us now, like these pious *women,* raise our eyes to him with an holy and unfeigned affection, and behold him pale and breathless on the accursed tree. Let us view him by faith, till the eye affects the heart, and till we learn to *glory in nothing but his cross, whereby the world* may be *crucified to us, and we* may be crucified *to the world.* (Gal. vi. 14.)

How wonderfully does the providence of God appear to have regarded *the body of Jesus,* which had so long been the *temple* of the indwelling Deity; even when it was deserted of that *Spirit* which had lately animated it; and while it *hung* (amazing thought, that it ever should have *hung !) between the bodies* of *two thieves* on a *cross,* without the gates of *Jerusalem!* He, who has *all hearts* in his hand, interposed by a secret but powerful influence on the *soldiers,* who *brake the legs* of the *malefactors,* to spare those of *Christ;* that so nothing which looked like a *prophecy* of him should want its proper *accomplishment.* But *his side was pierced;* and how deep was the wound, when *immediately there came out of it blood and water!* Happy emblem of the blessed effect of his death! *He came* both *by water and blood* (as *he who saw and testified* this important fact leads us to improve it, 1 John v. 6.;) and by this means at once *atones* the injured justice of God, and *purifies* the souls of them that believe in him.

Our indignation rises against the man that could, by such an outrage as this, abuse the *dead body* of our *Redeemer:* but oh, let us seriously remember the hand which *our sins* had in all that was now done. *He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities:* (Isa. liii. 5). And therefore it is said concerning those *on whom the ends of the world are to come,* that *they shall look on him whom they have pierced and mourn.* (Zech. xii. 10.) May we *mourn* over him with a genuine evangelical sorrow, when we consider *whom* we *have pierced;* and how deep and how often we have *pierced him;* and upon what slight temptations; and under how many engagements rather to have bathed his wounds with our tears, and even to have exposed our own hearts to the sharpest weapon by which the madness of sinners might have attempted to injure him.

The *boldness of Joseph,* and even of *Nicodemus* himself, deserves our notice on such an occasion. They *are not ashamed* of the infamy of his *cross,* but come with all holy reverence and affection to *take down* those sacred remains of *Jesus;* nor did they think the finest *linen,* or the choisest *spices,* too valuable on such an occasion. But who can describe their consternation and distress when they saw *him,* who they *trusted should have delivered Israel,* a cold and bloody corpse in their arms; and left *him* in the *sepulchre* of *Joseph,* whom they expected to have seen on the *throne of David!*

MATTHEW XXVII. 62—66.

Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make *it* as sure as you can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

We see the restless and implacable malice of *Christ's enemies*, which pursued him even to his *tomb*, and there endeavoured to blast his memory by fixing upon him the character of an *imposter*. They demanded, and procured *a guard for his sepulchre*. And here also we have a repeated instance of God's *taking the wise in their own craftiness*. (Job v. 13.) The *seal* and the *guard* served only more fully to attest the doctrine of *Christ's resurrection*, which they were set to overthrow, and to grace the triumph they were intended to oppose. Thus shall all the rage, and all the artifice of his enemies, at length promote the purposes of his glory: thus shall *meat* at length *come out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong*. (Judges xiv. 14) *The wrath of man*, O Lord, *shall praise thee; and the remainder of it shall thou restrain*, and shalt triumph over it, either by thy grace, or by thy vengeance. (Psalm lxxvi. 10.)

PART V.

MATT. XXVI. MARK XVI. LUKE XXIV. JOHN XX. XXI.

CONTAINING THE PERIOD OF FORTY DAYS, FROM THE MORNING OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST TO THE DAY OF HIS ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN, IN THE YEAR THIRTY.

SECTION I.

MATT. XXVIII. 1—8. MARK XVI. 1—8.

WHEN the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning, the first *day* of the week, as it began to dawn, they came unto the sepulchre, to see *it*, at the rising of the sun.

And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment: and they were affrighted. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Be not affrighted, for I know that ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is not here; for he is risen, as he said: Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples, and Peter, that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you: lo, I have told you.

And they departed quickly, and fled from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any *man:* for they were afraid; and did run to bring his disciples word.

How fit is it that we should *sing unto the Lord a new song!* and with what thankful hearts should we join, on *his own day*, and on every day, to congratulate the triumph of his *rising from the dead*, and to rejoice in this *birth-day* of our hopes! Now is the *justice of God* amply *satisfied*, or the prisoner had never been released. Now is the *reproach of the cross ceased*, and turned into proportionable glory. *That reproach was rolled away* at once by the *descending angel*, who *appeared* not to awaken *Christ* from his sleep, or to bring him *a new life*, for he had himself *a power*, whenever he pleased, to resume that which he had voluntarily resigned, (John x. 18;) but he came to add a solemn pomp to his revival, and to strike *the guards* with such a *terror* as would effectually prevent any mad attempt on this glorious *Conqueror*, when he was bursting the bonds in which he had for a while been held.

O Lord, we acknowledge the truth of thy promise: *thou didst not leave* his *soul in hell, neither didst thou suffer* the flesh of *thine Holy One to see corruption.* (Psalm xvi. 10.) *Now is Christ* indeed *risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept*, (1 Cor. xv. 20:) may we, in conformity to his holy example, be *dead to sin*, and *to the world; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also* may *walk in newness of life!* (Rom. vi. 4.) Then will *he that raised up Christ from the dead*, ere long, *quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us.* (Rom. viii. 11.)

We are now again called, as by the *angel's* voice, *to come and see the place where the Lord lay*, and to take an affectionate survey of that *sepulchre*, which *our rising Saviour* had left, and where he had laid aside the *dress of death*, as a token that he should return to it no more. How wonderful that he should ever have *lain there!* that the *Lord of life* should have dwelt among the *dead*, and from the glory of the *throne* of God should have sunk down to the abasement of the *grave!*—But he has burst its prison doors, and hath *abolished death, and him who had the power of it;* abolished it for himself and us. How are all its terrors now disarmed! *O death where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!* (1 Cor. xv. 55.)

With what pleasure did the *angels* deliver this gracious message of *their Lord* as well as *ours!* and with what transport

did the pious *women* receive it! Behold the tender care of *Christ* over his people! *Angels* have it immediately in charge to send the glad tidings to *his disciples;* and *Jesus* repeats and confirms them. *Go tell my brethren,* I am risen from the dead. *Lord,* is this thy language concerning those who but a few hours before had *forsaken thee!* and one of them, with such dreadful imprecations *denied thee!* Yet even *that disciple* is not excluded; nay, to *him* is it peculiarly addressed: *go tell my brethren,* and in particular tell *Peter,* that he, poor mourner, may especially be comforted. *Compassionate Redeemer,* thou hast brought up from the tomb with thee that tenderness and goodness which laid thee there!

Such is the freedom and glory of thy grace, that thou sometimes dost *first manifest thyself* to those who were once in the most miserable bondage to *Satan.* Whenever this is the case, may the peculiar obligation be remembered! May every remainder of *unbelief* be subdued in our souls! and may we joyfully *communicate* to all around us the tidings of a *risen Saviour,* and the merciful discoveries of his presence to us!

SECTION II.

Matt. xxviii. 11—15.

Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him *away* while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Luke xxiv. 1—9, 11.

Now upon the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with

them; and they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen. Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

Surely there is nothing in the whole *sacred story* which does in a more affecting manner illustrate the deplorable hardness of the human heart in this degenerate state, than the portion of it which is now before us. What but the testimony of an *apostle* could have been sufficient to persuade us, that men who had been but a few hours before the witnesses of such an awful scene, who had beheld the *angel descending*, had felt the *earth trembling*, and had seen the *sepulchre* bursting open by a Divine power, and had *fallen down* in helpless astonishment and confusion, perhaps expecting every moment to be themselves destroyed, should that very day, yea, that very morning, suffer themselves to be *hired by a sum of money* to do their utmost to asperse the character of *Christ*, and to invalidate the evidence of his *resurrection*, of which they were in effect *eye-witnesses?*

Nay, how astonishing is it, that the *chief priests* themselves, the public *ministers* of the *Lord of hosts*, could act such a part as this! They hear this full evidence that *he, that Jesus* whom they had murdered, was *risen from the dead;* and they well knew and remembered that he had himself put the *proof of his mission* on this very fact; *a fact* to which the *prodigies* at his death, which they themselves had seen and felt, added an inexpressible weight of probability. Who would not have expected that they should have been alarmed, convinced, and humbled; that they should have turned the remaining days of the *passover* into a public *fast*, and have solicitously sought out him who was so powerfully *declared to be the Son of God*, to cast themselves at his feet, and entreat his pardon and grace?

But instead of this, with invincible and growing malice, they set themselves to oppose him, and *bribe the soldiers* to testify *a lie*, the most to his dishonour of any that hell could invent. And surely, had not *Christ* been kept out of their sight and power, they would, notwithstanding all this, have endeavoured to bring him down to the *tomb* again, on the very same principles on which they would have *slain Lazarus* after his resurrection. (John xii. 10.) So true does it appear, in this renewed and unequalled instance, that *if men hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.* (Luke xvi. 31.)

No question but these very men, when pressed with the evidences of *Christ's resurrection*, answered, as succeeding *infidels* have presumptuously done, 'that he should have *appeared to them*, if he expected they should believe *he was risen*.' But what assurance can we have that the same *prejudices* which overbore the *testimony* of the *soldiers*, might not also have resisted even the *appearance* of *Christ* himself? Or, rather, that the *obstinacy* which led them to overbear conscience in one instance, might not have done it in the other? Justly therefore did God deny what wantonness, and not reason, might lead them to demand: justly did he give them up to dishonour their own understandings, as well as their moral character, by this mean and ridiculous *tale*, which brought men to testify what was done *while they were asleep*.

The most that common sense could make of *their report* had they deserved the character of honest men, would have been, that they knew nothing of the matter. And we have a thousand times more reason to admire the condescension of God, in sending his *apostles* to these wicked *rulers* with such additional proofs and messages, than to censure his providence in preventing Christ's public appearance. May he deliver us from the treachery and corruption of our own hearts! May he give us a holy tenderness and integrity of soul, that we may see *truth* wheresoever it is, and may follow it whithersoever it leads us; lest God should *choose our delusions*, and give us up in his righteous judgment to *believe a lie*, and to think ourselves wise in that *credulous infidelity* which is destroying its ten thousands amongst us!

SECTION III.

MARK XVI. 9. LUKE XXIV. 12. JOHN XX. 1—17.

THE first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and

seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him: It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary *the mother* of James, and other *women that were* with them, which told these things unto the apostles. Then arose Peter and that other disciple; and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, *and looking in*, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home, wondering at that which was come to pass.

Now when *Jesus* was risen early the first *day* of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. But she stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept she stooped down, *and looked* into the sepulchre; and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She

turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and *to* my God, and your God.

Let the faith of what has been done with regard to our glorified *Head*, and shall at length be accomplished with respect to all his *members*, daily gladden our hearts. When our eyes are *weeping*, and our souls sinking within us, let us raise our thoughts to *Jesus* our *risen*, and now *ascended Redeemer*, who says to all *his brethren* these gracious words (which may justly be received with transports of astonishment, and fill our heartsat the same time *with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*), "*I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.*"

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is now, through the death and resurrection of his dear Son (whom *by raising him from the dead* he has so solemnly owned under that relation), become *our Father* and *our God*. As such let us honour him, love him, and rejoice in him: and when we must leave this world, which *Christ* has long since left, let it delight oursouls to think that we shall likewise ascend after him, and dwell *with him* in his propitious Divine presence. In the mean time, *if we are risen with Christ*, let us *seek those things which are above, where Christ* now *sitteth at the right-hand of God*, (Col. iii. 1.;) and let us be willing, in whatever sense God shall appoint, to be *made conformable to his death*, that we may also be *partakers of his resurrection* and glory. (Phil. iii. 10, 11.)

SECTION IV.

MARK XVI. 10—13. LUKE XXIV. 14—35. JOHN XX. 18.

AND Mary Magdalene came to the disciples, as they mourned and wept, and told them, that she had seen the Lord, and *that* he had spoken these things unto her. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

After that he appeared in another form unto two of them. *For* behold two of them went that same day into the country, to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* three-score furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found *it* even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went; and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward

evening, and the day is far spent.—And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him ; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things *were done* in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. Neither believed they them.

How delightful a close of so melancholy a *day* to these pious *travellers! a day* surely long to be remembered by them and by us! They were *on a journey;* but they did not amuse themselves on it with any trifling subject of discourse. Their *hearts were* set upon *Christ*, and therefore their *tongues* were employed in speaking of him. And behold, *Christ himself*, the dear theme of their discourse, makes one among them ; he enlightens their eyes and warms their hearts, and at length *makes himself known to them in the breaking of bread.*

So may we often be *speaking of Christ*, from the fulness of our hearts, *when we go out, and when we come in!* So may *he* still, in some degree, *join himself with us* in spirit, guiding our souls into Divine knowledge, and animating them with holy love!

They bear an honourable and a just testimony to that great *Prophet* whom God had *raised up for them*, as *mighty before him both in word and deed.* But they knew not how to see through so dark a cloud: their hopes were almost extinguished, and they could only say, *We trusted this had been he that should have redeemed Israel.* Pitiable weakness! Yet too just an emblem of the temper which often prevails in the pious mind; when the *Christian* is ready to give up all, if *deliverence* does not proceed just in the method he expected. Yet was *Christ* even then *delivering Israel* in the most glorious and effectual manner, by those very *sufferings* which gave them such distress. *Verily* thou art *the God of Israel*, and *the Saviour*, when *thou art a God that hidest thyself* from us. (Isa xlv. 15.)

In faithful friendship, and with a plainness well becoming his office, the compassionate *Redeemer* upbraids them with their *slowness of heart to believe* these things, when they had received *line upon line, precept upon precept*, concerning them. How justly do we fall under such a *rebuke* in many instances! Let us then humbly say, *Lord, increase our faith!* (Luke xvii. 5.)

We should reasonably have thought ourselves *happy* in an opportunity of hearing or reading *this discourse* of *Jesus*, in which he threw such lustre on the *prophecies* of the *Old Testament*, and proved that according to the tenor of them, it was *necessary that the Mesiah should* thus *suffer, and so enter into his glory.* As providence has denied us this satisfaction, let us however improve this general and very important hint, that *Moses and all the prophets speak of these things.* Let us delight to trace the heavenly beam from its earliest dawn, and to observe how it grew *brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.* May the blessed *Spirit*, by whom those mysterious *predictions* were inspired, so direct our inquiries, that every *veil* may be taken off from our eyes, that we may *see Jesus* in the *Old Testament* as well as in the *New;* and see him in *both* with that lively fervour of holy affection which may cause *our hearts to burn within us!* And oh, that we may especially find that, when we surround *his table* he *makes himself known to us in the breaking of bread*, in such a manner, as to *fill* our souls *with all joy*, as well as *peace in believing!* (Rom. xv. 13.)

SECTION V.

Luke xxiv. 36—43. John xx. 19—23.

Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, and as they thus spake, came Jesus, and stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you, But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them *his* hands, and *his* feet, and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb; and he took *it*, and eat before them.

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: As my Father hath sent me, even so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whosoever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.

With pleasure let us echo back the words of the *apostle*, and join in that glad anthem which so well suits a resurrection-day, *The Lord is risen*: he is risen *indeed*. We owe our daily praises to God for the abundant demonstration he has given us of so important a fact, for every *appearance of Christ* to his *disciples*, and for all the *infallible tokens* by which *he shewed himself* to be *alive after his passion*. (Acts i. 3.)

He came with *peace* and blessings in his mouth; he came to disperse their *fears*, and to assure them of his forgiving love. How strong were those *prejudices* which so hardly yielded to such convincing proofs? And how rich was that *grace* which condescended to overcome them!

Christ breathed on the apostles, that they might *receive the Holy Spirit*. May he also *breathe* on our souls, and fill us with that glorious and Divine gift, which, if it qualified the *apostles* for their extraordinary office, may much more furnish *us* for the common duties of life! May we try our state by the characters which they have laid down in their inspired writings; in which sense, among others, we may assure ourselves, that, if they have declared *our sins to be remitted*, they *are remitted*; and, if indeed they are so, we need not to be much concerned by whom they are *retained*. Vain and arrogant men may claim a despotic power, which God never gave, and which these words are far from implying. But, whatsoever be the sentence they may pass, *they whom God blesseth, are blessed indeed*. (1 Chron. xvii 27.) May we always esteem it *a very small thing* to be *judged of man's judgment*, (1 Cor. iv. 3,) pitying, rather than resenting, the rashness of those who claim any such discretionary *sacerdotal power* as can give the real penitent any alarm, or the impenitent any encouragement to continue in sin!

SECTION VI.

MARK xvi. 14. JOHN xx. 24—29.

BUT Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

And after eight days again his eleven disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst as they sat at meat, and said, Peace *be* unto you: and he upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. Then saith he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: Blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed.

We most evidently see in this instance of *Thomas*, as well as in many circumstances of the story mentioned above, how far the *apostles* were from being rashly *credulous* in the important fact of *Christ's resurrection*. It is apparent, they erred in the contrary extreme: yet our gracious *Lord* condescended to satisfy *scruples* which were carried to an extravaganee. He renewed his *visit*, and at the same time renewed his *salutation* too, *Peace be unto you* was still his language; nor did he only speak, but act, as one who wished it, and was determined to give it.

What *peace* must it administer to the mind of this good man when *his Lord* said, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands, and reach hither thine hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing!* Evidently did he hereby shew, not only that he was *risen from the dead*, but that he circumstantially *knew* those events which had passed in his bodily absence,

and needed not human information. Let us then ever behave ourselves as *in the presence of Christ.* Let us act, and speak, and think, in such a manner as may bear his inspection; and, struck with these united demonstrations of wisdom, power, and grace, let us prostrate ourselves before him, and say, *Our Lord, and our God!* thus *honouring the Son as we honour the Father* (John v. 23,) and adoring the *indwelling Deity*, through this *veil of flesh*, in which it has been pleased to enshrine itself, and kindly to attemper, though not entirely to conceal, its rays.

Though we have not those sensible manifestations which were granted to *Thomas*, let it suffice us that the *apostles* were the *appointed witnesses* of all these things; and *what they saw with their eyes, and their hands handled of the word life, that they have declared unto us.* (1 John i. 1, 3.) Let us thankfully receive so convincing a testimony. Let us shew an upright and candid mind in accepting *such evidence* as the wisdom of God has seen fit to give us; remembering that a truly rational *faith* is the more acceptable to God, in proportion to the difficulties which it is able to surmount; and that there are peculiar *blessings* in store for them *who have not seen and yet have believed.*

SECTION VII.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 9, 10, 16—20. 1 COR. XV. 6.

AND as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them: (*and there were* about five hundred brethren *gathered together there,*) *and* he was seen of them all at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all

things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world.

Go tell my brethren: Lord, is thy language concerning those who but a few hours before had forsaken thee, and one of them with such dreadful imprecations denied thee! Compassionate Redeemer! thou hast brought up from the tomb with thee that tenderness and goodness which laid thee there!

With how ill a grace could the *Jews* complain of any deficiency in the evidence of *our Lord's resurrection*, when he appeared *alive* to so great a number as *five hundred at once!* How *glad* must these *disciples* be *when they saw the Lord!* and with what pleasure must they hear him *speaking of these things which concerned the kingdom of God!*

The *commission* he gave his *apostles*, though it *began at Jerusalem*, did not end there; nor was it confined within the narrow limits of *Judea;* but they were appointed to *go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* We to this day, in our remote land, enjoy the benefit of it. Let us remember the important consequences that will one way or another attend the *gospel* thus brought us. *If we believe* it, *we shall be saved; but if we believe* it *not, we shall be damned.* Life, or death, O my soul, is the certain issue of it, with regard to *thee* in particular. *Be surety to thy servant, O Lord, for good* (Psalm cxix. 122,) and *let my life be precious in thy sight!*

SECTION VIII.

John xxi. 1—14.

After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he *himself*. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them,

Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the mutitude of fishes.

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt *his* fisher's coat *unto him*, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come *and* dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

Christ first *called* these *disciples* when they were employed in the duties of their proper profession in life, and he now *manifests himself to them* while they were so engaged; perhaps particularly intending thereby to encourage an honest *industry* in which indeed we are far more likely to enjoy his presence, and to converse with him, than when we throw away our time in idleness and inactivity.

A while he leaves them to *labour in vain*, that when the plentiful *draught of fishes* came, it might be the more remarkable. Sometimes he may deal thus with his *ministers*, in their endeavours *to catch men;* that we may be convinced thereby, to whose power we owe our success, and may not *sacrifice to* our own *net*, *or burn incense to* our own *drag*. (Hab. i. 16.)

All the *disciples* rejoiced at his appearance; but *Peter* was the foremost to cast himself at his feet. Conscious that so *much had been forgiven him*, he is solicitous to shew that he *loves much*, (Luke vii. 47.) So may the remembrance of our

miscarriages work upon us, to make us more vigorous in *Christ's* service, and to inspire us with such zeal and affection as *many waters may not be able to quench, nor the floods to drown!* (Cant. viii. 7.)

Let us not imagine *this miracle* was merely intended for a demonstration of *Christ's* Divine *power* over all that *passeth through the paths of the sea*, (Psalm viii. 8;) it was also the work of *wisdom* and *bounty*. By the sale of *so many large* and fine *fishes* a seasonable provision was made for the subsistence of his *disciples at Jerusalem*, while they were there *waiting for the descent of the Spirit*, (Luke xxiv. 49.) Let every circumstance of this kind encourage us to trust him, as the *Lord* of *nature* and of *grace*, who will withhold from us no necessary supply of either, while we are making it our humble and faithful care to promote his glory.

SECTION IX.

John xxi. 15—24.

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, loves thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? he saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? and he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee, and carry *thee* whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what *shall* this man *do?* Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is *that* to thee? Follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, he shall not die; but, if I will that he tarry till I come, what *is that* to thee. This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

What if *our Lord Jesus Christ* should put the same *question* to us that he did to *Peter*, in this remarkable passage, and should thus *repeat* it again and again? Are there none of us who should be at a loss for an answer? None of us to whom he might say, *I know that you have not the love of Christ in you?* Or are there none of us who apprehend, that, if we had ourselves been thus pressed, we could at the very best, only have said, *Lord, thou that knowest all things, knowest that I cannot tell whether I love thee or not?*—Blush, and be confounded, O my soul, if thou must reply with such uncertainty to a question of so great importance, and in a case where all the ardour of the heart might be so justly expected.

But are there not still some of us who through Divine grace could reply with pleasure, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that*, notwithstanding all the unhallowed and lamented infirmities of our lives, *we* do indeed *love thee?*—And, if we are thus really conscious to ourselves of such an unfeigned affection, let it be our daily joy, that he who implanted this Divine principle in our hearts, discerns and sees it there; and, *knowing all things*, he perfectly *knows this*, however we may be suspected, however we may be censured.

Let us learn also by what method we are to express *our love*, according to our ability and opportunity; even by *feeding his sheep*, and promoting the interest and edification of his church. Let *ministers* especially do it; and let them not forget those dear creatures, *the lambs* of the flock. *Jesus* the compassionate *Shepherd* as we see, did not forget them; but taught his servants with the greatest tenderness both by his precepts, and by his example, to *gather them in* their *arms, and carry them in their bosom.* (Isa. xl. 11.)

Happy are those *ministers* who, instead of indulging a vain *curiosity* in things wherein they are not at all, or but very little concerned, are spending their lives in such faithful services; *feeding the flock of God:* and *taking the oversight of it, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;* that *when the chief Shepherd shall appear, they may receive an unfading crown of glory;* (1 Pet. v. 2, 4,) *a crown*, which will infinitely more than repay, not only their *labours*, but their *sufferings* too!

Happy *Peter* who, having worn out his better years in the service of *Christ*, courageously *stretched out* his aged arms to be *bound*, and, being *borne away* to tortures and death, shed the last slow ebb of his blood as a *martyr* for him *who had loved him and given himself for him.*—And not less happy *the beloved* disciple, so willing to hazard his life in the same cause; though he was not in fact called to lay it down as a *martyr!* Our gracious *Lord*, who sees every purpose, and every affection, as it rises in the heart, favourably *accepts of the willing mind*, and will, through the riches of his grace, entitle *them* to the reward of equal suffering, who have waited with a like readiness, though they have not been called out to the severity of the like trial.

SECTION X.

1 Cor. xv. 7. Luke xxiv. 44—49. Acts i. 4.

After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And being assembled together with *them*, *he* commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me.

And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in

his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

We have surely perpetual reason for thankfulness, when we think of that *commission* which *Christ* gave to his *disciples:* nor is it a circumstance of little importance, that they had it in charge, when they published this message of grace, to *begin at Jerusalem;* though the religious opportunities that were abused by that ungrateful city had already been so great, and their provocations so many. Amazing condescension of the *Prince of Peace*, that he sent his *ambassadors of peace* to them when they had hardly laid aside the weapons with which they had slain him, and were scarce rested after the cruel fatigue which their officious malice had given them in abetting his murder! Behold, he offers them all the invaluable blessings purchased by his *blood*, while it was yet, as we may say, warm upon *mount Calvary!* and on the same principles, even unto this day, *where sin hath abounded*, there *is grace abounding much more.* (Rom. v. 20.)

Christ opened the understanding of the apostles, to apprehend the sense of *scripture.* Let us study that *sacred book* with a humble dependance upon the aid of that *blessed Spirit* by whom it was dictated. And let these *apostles* who were thus divinely taught, be reverently regarded as our *surest guides*, when we are studying the *oracles of the Old Testament;* considering the extraordinary *commission* with which *Christ* sent them forth, the *power from on high* with which he *invested* them, and the ample *credentials* which he hereby gave them.

SECTION XI.

MARK XVI. 15—19. ACTS I. 6—12. LUKE XXIV. 50—53.

WHEN they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem,

and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

And he led them out as far as to Bethany.

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

So then after the Lord had spoken these things unto them, he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, *and* while they beheld, he was parted from them, *and* taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight, and carried him up into heaven, and he sat on the right hand of God.

And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath-day's journey: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.

Thus did our victorious *Saviour ascend on high, and lead captivity captive: the chariots of God* which attended him were *twenty thousand, even thousands of angels!* (Ps. lxviii. 17, 18:) and being *gone into heaven,* he *is* there seated *on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject to him;* (1 Peter iii. 22.) Let us his humble followers *look after him* with holy joy and pleasing expectation; congratulating his triumphs, and trusting through his grace to share them.

Like the *apostles,* let us *bow down and worship him;* and while we continue here below, let us make it our daily labour and care to *seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at*

the right-hand of God: (Col. iii. 1.) And, instead of amusing ourselves with the vain dreams of temporal grandeur and felicity, or with curious inquiries after those *times and seasons which the Father has reserved in his own power*, let us apply with vigour and zeal to that business which he has assigned us; labouring to the utmost to promote his *gospel*, and, by a diligent improvement of our time and opportunities, to prepare for his *final appearance*, when *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven* with more public splendour than he returned thither, and shall come in *the glory of his Father, and his own glory*, with a majestic pomp which *every eye shall see*, and with the *sound of a trumpet*, which even all the nations of *the dead shall hear*.

SECTION XII.

MARK XVI. 20. JOHN XX. 30, 31; XXI. 25.

AND many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I [*John*] suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.

And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with *them*, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Let us thankfully own his gracious *presence with his disciples*, whom he left behind him; and with admiring gratitude reflect upon the happy consequences of that *presence*, in the establishment of the *gospel* in the world, and the transmission of it even unto us, in so remote an age and country.

Let us especially praise him for these *sacred records* which contain such an authentic and exact account of those important facts in which we are all so nearly concerned; *records* incomparably more valuable than the *writings* of our private estates, or the *charters* of our public liberties. Let us earnestly pray that their great design may be answered in us; and

make it our importunate request to Him who is the *giver of all grace*, that through the operations of that *Holy Spirit*, without the influence of which even *scripture itself*, with all our advantages for understanding and improving it, will be *a sealed book*, or *a dead letter*, our faith may be nourished and confirmed by every portion of it which we read; and that our hearts may be so delivered into the mould of his word, that *believing on Christ*, under all the characters he bears, we *may have life through his name;* and may at length *receive the end of our faith in the* complete *salvation of our souls*, through him, to whom with the *Father*, and the eternal *Spirit*, be undivided honours, and everlasting praises. *Amen* and *Amen!*

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